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ABSTRACT

Noting the need for additional information on the transition of children from Pacific Islands early childhood services to primary school, this exploratory study was designed to provide an account of the experiences of children, parents, and teachers, focusing on language and other aspects of children's move from Pacific Islands early childhood centers into English-language primary schools. Participating were 27 children and their families from one of five ethnic groups (Cook Islands, Niue, Samoan, Tokelauan, and Tongan). Interview methods were used to collect information on the experiences of children, their parents, and their early childhood and primary school teachers. Findings from the interviews are organized with reference to five research questions concerning: (1) the similarities and differences between the contexts of home, school, and early childhood settings; (2) the aspirations, expectations, and views of parents, teachers, and children of these contexts; (3) how well the children perceive they make the transition; (4) use of information by teachers and parents to facilitate transition; and (5) how schools assist and support the home languages and cultures of Pacific Islands children starting primary school. The research offers a methodological model for interviews with children, parents, and other participants from these Pacific Islands communities. Key issues emerging from the literature review, demographic data, and findings include continuity of Pacific Islands languages and culture, partnership between home and school, teachers' and parents' expectations, implications of the hidden curriculum, curriculum continuity, literacy, teacher education, and Pacific Islands representation in schools and education. (Appended are letters of consent, interview schedules, and a glossary. Contains 169 references.) (KB)

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TRANSITION TO SCHOOL FROM PACIFIC ISLANDS EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	vii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	ix
CHAPTER 1—BACKGROUND TO PROJECT	1
Rationale	1
Literature Review	1
Theories and Paradigms	2
Theoretical Underpinnings	2
Continuity, Discontinuity, and Easing Transition	3
Structure and Approaches to Learning	4
Philosophies, Pedagogies, and Socio-historical Contexts	5
Policies and Paradigms for Successful Transition	6
Parents', Communities', and Children's Perspectives	11
Socioeconomic Satus	15
Special Needs/Special Education	16
Pacific Islands Early Childhood Services	18
Research Questions	22
Summary	23
CHAPTER 2—DEMOGRAPHIC DATA	25
Brief Demographic Characteristics	25
Enrolment Patterns and Trends	25
Enrolments by Gender and Service Type	27
Pacific Islands Enrolment by Ethnicity	29
Pacific Islands Language Groups	30
Summary	31
CHAPTER 3—METHODOLOGY	33
Sample	33
Children	33
Parents	34
Early Childhood Teachers	34
School Teachers	34
Schools	34
Procedures	35
Ethics	35
Advice on Research Processes	35
Training and Piloting Procedures	36
Access Negotiations	37
Contacting and Interviewing Parents: Cultural Practices	37
Culturally Appropriate Practices: Samoan Sample	37
Culturally Appropriate Practices: Cook Islands Sample	38
Culturally Appropriate Practices: Tongan Sample	38
Culturally Appropriate Practices: Niue Sample	39
Culturally Appropriate Practices: Tokelauan Sample	39

Interview Procedures with Children 40
Cook Islands 40
Niue 40
Samoan 40
Tokelauan 41
Tongan 41
Data Preparation and Analyses 41
Interviews 41
School Charters 42
Summary 42
CHAPTER 4—RESULTS 43
Overview 43
Homes, Schools, and Early Childhood Centres: Similarities and Differences 43
Children's Experiences 43
Similarities 44
Differences 44
Parents' Perceptions 45
Similarities 45
Differences 45
Early Childhood Teachers' Views 47
Similarities 47
Differences 47
School Teachers' Views 47
Similarities 47
Differences 48
Summary 49
Expectations and Views of School, Early Childhood Centre, and Home 49
Children's Views 49
Parents' Views 50
Learning Expected at Home 50
Learning Expected at the Early Childhood Centre 51
Learning Expected at School 51
Early Childhood Teachers' Views 51
Expectations on Starting School 51
School Teachers' Views 52
Learning Expected at School 52
Summary 58
Transition from Home and Early Childhood Centres to School 58
Children's Experiences 58
Parents' Perceptions 59
Early Childhood Teachers' Views 59
School Teachers' Views 60
Summary 62

Facilitating Transition Based on the Research Findings 62
Children's Experiences 62
Parents' Views 62
Early Childhood Teachers' Views 63
School Teachers' Views 63
Summary 64
Maintenance and Support of Home Languages and Culture at School 64
Children's Experiences 64
Parents' Perceptions 64
Further Comments from the Parents about Transition 65
Early Childhood Teachers' Views 66
School Teachers' Views 67
Language Spoken at Home 67
Further Comments from the School Teachers about Transition 70
Summary 73
Language Policy Content of the Schools' Charters 73
Specific Reference to Pacific Islands Students 73
Cultural Diversity in General 74
Exclusion of Cultural Specifications 75
Charters and School Practices 75
Overall Summary: Issues for Children, Parents, and Teachers 76
Children 76
Learning Activities: Likes and Dislikes 76
Experiences of Transition to School 76
Suggestions 76
Parents 77
Similarities and Differences between Home, School, and Early Childhood Centres 77
Learning Expected at Home and School 77
Transition to School 77
Suggestions Regarding Transition 77
Early Childhood Teachers 77
Similarities and Differences between Home, School, and Early Childhood Centres 77
Learning Expected Prior to School Entry 78
Transition to School 78
School Teachers 78
Similarities and Differences between Home, School, and Early Childhood Centres 78
Learning Expected Prior to School Entry 78
Concerns about Expectations 78
Transition to School 79
Language Experiences and Issues 79
Charters 79

CHAPTER 5—DISCUSSION 81
Research Methods 81
Key Issues 82
Language and Cultural Continuity 82
Funding for Language Provision in Schools 82
Partnership between Home and School 82
Success Models 83
Expectations of Teachers and Parents 83
Hidden Curriculum 83
Curriculum Continuity 84
Literacy 84
Teacher Education 85
Pacific Islands Representation 86
Generalisability of Findings 86
Future Research 86
REFERENCES 89
APPENDIX A—Letters of Consent 99
APPENDIX B—Interview Schedules 111
APPENDIX C—Glossary 143

LIST OF TABLES

1. Summary of Children on Regular Rolls of Early Childhood Education by Ethnicity and Service Type, 1998 26
2. Number of Pacific Islands Children Enrolled in Early Childhood Education by Service Type, 1990–1998 26
3. Proportion of Pacific Islands Early Childhood Students by Service Type, 1990–1998 27
4. Pacific Islands Early Childhood Enrolments by Service Type and Gender, 1997 and 1998 28
5. Pakeha/European Early Childhood Enrolments by Service Type and Gender, 1997 and 1998 29
6. Pacific Islands Early Childhood Students by Service Type and Ethnicity, 1998 29
7. Enrolments in Pacific Islands Language Groups by Ethnicity, 1990–1998 30
8. Pacific Islands Early Childhood Enrolments by Ethnicity, Wellington and Auckland Regional Council Areas, 1998 31

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At fono and fora in 1997–98, NZCER was informed that there is a need to enhance existing knowledge about the transition of children from Pacific Islands services to primary school. This small-scale, exploratory study was designed to include around 6 families from each of 5 ethnic groups (Cook Islands, Niue, Samoan, Tokelauan, and Tongan). The intention was to provide an account of the experiences of children, parents, and teachers, focusing on language and other aspects of children's move from Pacific Islands early childhood centres into English-language primary schools.

The report includes a literature review together with a section on current demographic data on Pacific Islands children and centres. The literature review on children's transition to school places a particular emphasis on Bronfenbrenner's and Vygotsky's theories, and on the experiences of Pacific Islands children and their families. Five research questions are raised, focused on children's transition from Pacific Islands early childhood centres to schools:

1. What are the similarities and differences between the contexts of home, school, and early childhood settings?
2. What are the aspirations, expectations, and views of parents, teachers, and children of these contexts?
3. How well do children make the transition between the contexts (as defined by the children themselves)?
4. How can the information collected in this study assist teachers and parents to facilitate transition across the 3 contexts? and, in particular;
5. How do schools continue to assist and support the home languages and cultures of Pacific Islands children starting primary school? What is the language policy of the school (as stated in the charter)?

To place the present study specifically in a Pacific early childhood context, details are outlined of relevant demographic characteristics of Pacific Islands children participating in early childhood education in New Zealand. Information is provided across service types and with reference to specific Pacific ethnic/language groups. The data show some regional variations in enrolments for different Pacific groups.

Interview methods are described, with a focus on culturally appropriate practices. The results of the interviews focus primarily on participants' accounts, and include the voices of 27 children, their parents, and their early childhood and primary school teachers. The report outlines the major concerns and suggestions from these groups. There is also an analysis of the content of the charters of the 19 participating primary schools.

Findings from the interviews with children, parents, early childhood teachers, and school teachers are organised with reference to the 5 research questions. The interviews yielded considerable information about young Pacific Islands children's experiences of different contexts. Contexts included their homes, their early childhood centres or programmes, and schools.

The research offers a methodological model for interviews with children, parents, and

other participants from Cook Islands, Niue, Samoan, Tokelauan, and Tongan communities. Participation of the Pacific Islands early childhood national organisations, and their nominated field researchers, provided links between the research and the 5 communities.

Several key issues emerge from a synthesis of the literature reviewed, the demographic data, and findings from the interviews and charter analyses. Key issues are concerned with:

- continuity of Pacific Islands languages and culture;
- partnership between home and school;
- expectations of teachers and parents;
- implications of the hidden curriculum;
- curriculum continuity;
- literacy;
- teacher education; and
- Pacific Islands representation in schools and education.

The report outlines suggestions for further research, derived from the data and from the research process.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project represents the combined work of a team of researchers and writers. Members of all 5 Pacific groups represented in the study carried out interviews with the participating families and early childhood centres. The project team included:

- Lia Mapa (Tongan sample, writing assistance);
- Val Podmore (leader—training and writing);
- Le'autuli'ilagi Sauvao (fieldwork co-ordinator, Samoan sample, writing assistance);
- Tapaeru Tereora (Cook Islands sample);
- Suria Timoteo (Tokelauan sample);
- Ina Mora (Niue sample);
- Taniela Vao (translation, Tongan group);
- with 1998 researcher—Diane Mara;
- and July to November 1999, background demographic data and preliminary literature draft—David Yeboah.

We also acknowledge the contributions of Barb Bishop (data analysis), Roberta Tiatia, Jo Hilder, and Rachel Nankivell (project support), and Beverley Thomson (library searches).

We acknowledge warmly the participation of the parents, children, early childhood teachers, and school teachers in the interviews. We are also grateful to the school principals for their assistance with access to the schools and for providing copies of their schools' charters.

Representatives of the Pacific Islands early childhood organisations made valuable contributions to planning the study, which was designed originally by Diane Mara in consultation with members of the project advisory committee.

We are particularly grateful for the contributions of the members of the advisory committee who commented on the draft report and suggested recommendations for further research. Members who attended the final meetings are:

- Ms Diane Mara, Wellington College of Education
- Dr Ana Koloto, Auckland University/Utu Lele
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- Mr Alfred Palu, PIECCA
- Ms Taonefoou Ogotau Falisima, Kautaha Aoga Niue, C/- Pacific Studies Centre, Auckland College of Education
- Mrs Margery Renwick
- Ms Tepaeru Tereora, President, Te Punanga o te Reo Kuki Airani
- Mrs Rosetta Iupeli, ECD Wellington
- Mrs Suria Timoteo
- Mrs Ina Mora
- Le'autuli'ilagi Sauvao, NZCER
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- Lia Mapa, NZCER
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- Dr Val Podmore, NZCER

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Val Podmore, Le'autuli'ilagi Sauvao, and Lia Mapa
March 2000.

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND TO PROJECT

Rationale

The NZCER Pacific Islands Early Childhood Research fono held in August 1997 identified transition to school as a key area for investigation. Some concern was expressed in that forum, and later at the Anau Ako Pasifika Conference in Tokoroa in September 1997, that the school system was not supporting, promoting, or extending the values, knowledge, and skills that had been fostered within the various Pacific Islands centre- and home-based early childhood provisions. To date, there has been very limited research in this area of transition to school. The focus of this research was in line with the Ministry of Education's key results area "home-school relationships".

Across the early childhood and primary school sector as a whole, there are still a number of challenges which remain in order for the successful transition of children to be fully realised. Several of these challenges emerged from the papers and workshops held at the Transition to School National Seminar in Wellington in November 1997. In particular, a reference by Holmes (1998), to Rita Walker's talk on transitions within and from a kaupapa Maori framework, is relevant here. She is reported to have said "that the cultures of the home, early childhood centre and the school each intersect with ethnicity, class and other variables" and she sees "little progress having been made with these issues over the years" (p. 50).

There was a clearly articulated need to enhance current knowledge about the transition of Pacific Islands children from Pacific Islands early childhood provisions to primary school. It was intended that this exploratory study would assist in articulating some key issues and challenges for these groups of young children.

Literature Review

A library search was carried out to retrieve available resources on transition to school (preschool/early childhood to primary) of Pacific Islanders in New Zealand. The following databases and resources were used: the British education index, the Canadian education index, Catalogue—the library database, EDUC PACIFIC database, ERIC U.S. education database, INNZ—articles in New Zealand journals, NZBN—books held by New Zealand libraries, the World Wide Web, and Uncover.

In December 1998 the research team organised the information retrieved on transition from early childhood to primary school into main topics of relevance to the current study. It was also noted that transition studies within these topics take on different perspectives including a "parent's" perspective, a "teacher's" perspective, and/or a "child's" perspective (Mapa, Podmore, & Mara, 1998). The main topics focus on transition to school in the context of:

- theories and paradigms;
- parents and communities;
- languages and culture;

- teachers' perceptions and experiences;
- special needs and special education;
- socioeconomic status;
- curriculum, assessment, and records; and
- Pacific Islands communities.

Numerous studies provide suggestions for successful transition from home and early childhood settings to primary school. However, at the time this research commenced the only completed study of children's transition from Pacific Islands early childhood services to school was Wolfgramm's (1992) report on the Anau Ako Pasifika project. Further work has been completed since then (e.g., Sauvao, 1999) on the transition of ā'oga 'āmata children, but there remains a scarcity of research carried out across the Pacific groups.

Theories and Paradigms

Theoretical Underpinnings

Several studies pertaining to transition have drawn on Bronfenbrenner's ecological approach (1979). Bronfenbrenner described contexts for development, and his ecological model draws attention to the importance of home, school, and community as contexts for learning and development. This approach is of particular relevance to the present research. It also underpins a range of studies which focus on continuities and discontinuities across contexts.

Edgar (1986) discussed the interrelationships between family background and the transition to school in Australia. Drawing on Bronfenbrenner's ecological model, he stressed the need for transition processes to be sensitive to the changing family and community settings. Edgar demonstrated the potential usefulness and gains of establishing cross-linking parent committees from early childhood settings to primary school settings. He contended that schools were taking over the role of parents as educators, and that there was a professional tendency to push parents out. Edgar drew attention to the changing family and community contexts in which children lived, and argued that transition processes should be sensitive to all of these contexts (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Theories of children's learning and development also underpin a number of studies focused on the learning experiences of children moving from early childhood to school settings. Vygotsky's theory is prominent in more recent work in New Zealand and Australia. Vygotsky (1978) emphasises the contexts of learning, and that learning involves children's being influenced by and understanding the culture(s) which surround them. Vygotsky saw children's learning as being guided, modelled, and structured by adults in a process he called "scaffolding". According to Vygotsky, children's learning is most appropriately achieved in the "zone of proximal development". This is the area slightly beyond the level of the child's independent competence, where learning may take place by the child being guided in the presence of more competent others (Vygotsky, 1978).

Pratt (1985) examined children's transition to school in Australia, and, in particular, the demands that were placed on children when they began formal education. Using the concepts of development and learning, Pratt compared the early childhood experiences of children with those experienced in the traditional year 1 classroom. Pratt found that formal teaching was rare in early childhood education settings, and that the emphasis in early

childhood centres had mostly been on development. He pointed out that children in early childhood education settings were encouraged to explore and develop their potential in an environment which was designed to promote the development of oral, intellectual, physical, emotional, moral, and social skills.

According to Pratt, when children moved from early childhood settings into year 1, there was a shift of emphasis from development to formal learning. Children entering year 1 were no longer encouraged to explore and develop their abilities as in early childhood centres, but rather "the knowledge that they were expected to acquire was specified and divided up into categories by adults" (p. 12). The problem with this shift appeared to be that many children were introduced to formal education before they were ready to benefit from the specific guided participation offered (Vygotsky, 1978).

Pratt (1985) pointed out further that children's transition to school should be introduced gradually, and that teachers should consider carefully the teaching techniques used and discuss them with the children. Pratt noted also that, as children were introduced to formal education, more attention should be given to the processes involved, including explicit discussion of the processes with the children. His conclusion was that "children would make significant gains from explicit discussion of language and thought" (p. 15).

Continuity, Discontinuity, and Easing Transition

A number of resources have been provided with the intention of easing children's transition to school (e.g., Briggs & Potter, 1990; Renwick, 1984, 1997). Several resources and related research point to the need to relate transition strategies and policies to children's perspectives and expectations. There is clearly concern about continuity and discontinuity of children's experiences.

In the United States, Seefeldt, Galper, and Denton (1997) pointed out that educators without knowledge of children's conception of, and expectations for, their next grade placement tend to impose their ideas of what would ease transition to school on the children. Seefeldt et al., who studied two cohorts of students of the Headstart Program (151 and 171 students respectively), showed that educators do not plan according to what children already know, understand, and expect. They concluded that such practices do not support children's smooth transition. Kelly (1955) and Hunt (1961) testified further to the confusion, anxiety, and frustration that children encountered in transition, especially where children's knowledge, understanding, and expectations were neither sought nor considered.

In Australia, Elliot and Lambert (1985) argued that, when children move to school, unfamiliar sensations, environments, and experiences confront them. Briggs and Potter (1990) provided a handbook for teacher educators and early childhood student teachers which complemented the existing literature on the difficulties of transition to school, and suggested ideas for easing the transition.

Margetts (1997) studied 197 children in Australia and examined the factors which impacted on children's adjustment to the first year of primary school, pointing out that "transition to school had been perceived as one of the major challenges children had to face in their early childhood years" (p.1). Margetts stated that starting school is a time for children to cope with change and challenges, and that adjustment to the new situation is

critical to successful transition. She identified a number of challenges including physical discontinuities, as well as discontinuities in curricula, teaching staff, peer groups, and parents.

In addition, Margetts (1994, 1997) found that several factors impacted on children's adjustment to school, including the number of transition activities offered by the schools, children's age, gender, first language, experience of early childhood services, and their peers (being accompanied by a familiar playmate). Margetts (1997) concluded that "transition programmes should be based on the philosophy that adjustment to school was easier when children were familiar with the new situation, parents were informed about the new school and parents had information about children's development and previous experience" (p. 4).

In Greece, Kakavoulis (1994) studied 75 nursery teachers, 566 first grade students, and their parents. Kakavoulis wrote that "the transition from one level of education to the next puts each time new demands for adjustment that cause critical psychological strains and conflicts in the relation between the child and the school" (p. 42). A similar conclusion was reached for the United Kingdom by Fabian (1994).

Several writers describe the entrance to primary school as one of the most important changes that occurs in a child's life (Curtis, 1986). Curtis proposed 4 areas where children in the United Kingdom experience a lack of continuity and distress in the transition to school; these are changes in the physical environment, differences in classroom organisation between early childhood and primary school contexts, discontinuities in curriculum content, and differing ideologies of early childhood and primary school teachers.

Structure and Approaches to Learning

The smoothness of children's transition has also been linked to the structure of early childhood education programmes. Schweinhart and Weikart (1998) assessed which of 3 approaches to learning was most effective in early childhood education centres in the United States, by following 68 young people aged 3 and 4 years. The 3 models they looked at included first, direct instruction in which the teacher presented the activities and the children participated in them. The second model was the high/scope curriculum which involved both the teacher and children planning and initiating activities, while the third—the traditional nursery school approach—involved activities being initiated by the children.

Schweinhart and Weikart (1998) demonstrated that children from poor homes in the United States encountered fewer emotional problems if they attended early childhood programmes based on child-initiated activities. They suggested further that the goals of early childhood services should not only be academic, but should also include children learning to make decisions, solve problems, and relate well with others (*see also* Schweinhart and Weikart, 1997). Schweinhart and Weikart (1998) postulated that the second model—high/scope curriculum approach—presented good academic preparation for children, but did not assist adequately with the long-term development of their personal and social behaviour.

In Sweden, Dahlberg and Taguchi (1994) undertook a theoretical analysis of the interaction between early childhood and school settings. Using a socio-historical and contextual analysis of the traditions of early childhood centres and schools, they demonstrated that those 2 institutions were the result of the predominant values, notions, and ideological, economical, social, and judicial circumstances prevailing at any one time. They argued that there was a large and decisive inheritance of ideas and notions, which was jointly shared by the 2 institutions, although differences were also discernible. They postulated that it was possible to reach a deeper understanding of the dynamics of transition from an analysis of the similarities and differences between early childhood services and school.

According to Dahlberg and Taguchi (1994), there are 2 different social constructs of the child, which correspond to the child in Swedish early childhood and school contexts. These constructs view the child as "nature" in early childhood settings, and the child as "a cultural and knowledge producer" in school settings. They postulate an alternative construct, which perceives the child as a "producer of culture and knowledge" in the continuum from early childhood to school.

In the period after 1970, there were changes to the early childhood education sector in Australia. The provision of early childhood education remained with voluntary organisations, funded by a combination of fundraising strategies and government grants. However, there were variations, from one suburb to another and from one state to another, in the provision of early childhood services. Mellor (1991) has discussed how early childhood education gained political importance and attracted federal government funding for innovative programmes as a result of strong lobbying by women's groups. State funding for early childhood services also gained momentum during the 1970s, with Queensland becoming the first to provide free early childhood education for all eligible children in 1972. The 1970s also saw the development of special programmes and systemic and organisational strategies to bridge the gap between early childhood and school contexts, with the aim of bringing early childhood services and teacher training within the state education system (*see also* Banff, 1980).

Special programmes were developed in Australia in the 1970s and 1980s to assist transition from early childhood services to school (Mellor, 1991). The resources included parent packages and information booklets, pamphlets, and films. However, Mellor pointed out that these developments did not address the fundamental issue of philosophical principles and pedagogical practices, which divide the early childhood and primary sectors. Mellor (1991) examined the structural divisions between early childhood centres and state primary schools in Australia, and how this division reflects major differences in aims, philosophy, and pedagogy. Like Pratt (1985), Mellor pointed out that when children move from early childhood services to school, they have to make the transition between different systems and different approaches to education and teaching. She noted further that the kindergarten movement deplored what it considered to be the compromise of Froebelian principles within the state primary schools.

Policies and Paradigms for Successful Transition

Several writers have developed models and concepts pertinent to successful transition. Wolbers (1997) reviewed the literature on implications for early intervention teams assisting transition to school of families on the New Zealand west coast. She identified the following key features which are listed below:

- Supporting and empowering the family as equal partners in the transition process (Family Focused Model).
- Holistic focus of transition with emphasis on the child's needs in relation to the family, early childhood centre, community, and school (Ecological Context).
- Promoting the rapid adjustment of the child and family to school by ensuring appropriate services are provided (Transition Planning).
- Information sharing early in the transition process regarding the new placement Placement).
- Staff training in the awareness of attitudes which may lead to enhancement of the child's successful participation in school (Attitudes).
- Collaboration among all those who are involved in the child's education (Collaborate Approach).
- Increasing all participants' satisfaction with the transition process, their participation in transitional planning, and the results of the transition process (Evaluating the Outcome). (Wolbers, 1997, p. 12)

Ramey and Ramey (1998) used United States experience to demonstrate the complexities of transition to school. According to Ramey and Ramey, the experiences of the transition lasted for a long time and contributed to the future interest and development of the child. They mentioned that the great expectations and powerful emotions associated with this transition contributed to one's feeling about schools and formal education, authority figures, and conformity, and also to one's sense of intellectual competency and popularity, and one's love of activities ranging from reading and math to art projects, field trips, and sports.

Ramey and Ramey identified 4 reasons why the transition to school had been singled out as significant and had become such a hot topic. The first related to the dramatic demographic changes within society and local communities, including increased cultural and linguistic diversity of children and families, increased female labour-force participation, family disruption, family violence, and so on. The second reason was the need to provide education to all children irrespective of whether they had major disabilities or serious health concerns.

The other reasons for the significance of transition to school in the United States were the crisis and uncertainty of funding for public schools and what the authors called the availability of new paradigms. Kagan (1994), Ramey and Ramey (1994 and 1998), and Sameroff and McDonough (1994) provided a synthesis of evidence, which showed that the new paradigms portray transition to school as multilevel, multiyear, and amenable to empirical interdisciplinary perspectives.

According to the Childcare Resource and Research Unit (1994), successful transition to elementary school in Canada required children to cope with many new demands (*see also* Bartholomew and Gustafsson, 1997). This research complemented the conclusions of Pratt

(1985) and Mellor (1991). The Childcare Resource and Research Unit argued that the way the child functions at school was the result of a combination of innate abilities, temperament as well as prior experiences in the family, and non-parental childcare. Other researchers espoused similar positions, arguing that the child's achievement at school was a function of the extent to which the child made a successful transition to school (*see*,for example, Alexander & Entwise, 1988; Entwise & Hayduk, 1978; Entwise & Alexander, 1993).

The Childcare Resource and Research Unit (1994) also examined the impact of regular non-parental childcare during the early years on the social skills that children demonstrated when they first entered the Canadian school system. It provided a matrix which postulated that the child's innate abilities and temperament, the child's experience in non-parental childcare, and the home environment impacted on the child's skills at the time of entry to school, which in turn determined the child's classroom experience and experience with peers. The classroom experience and the child's experience with peers then impacted on the child's transition to school and the attainment of academic basics. Other researchers have reached similar conclusions. For example, Ladd and Price (1987), and Coie (1990) provided evidence to demonstrate the effects of peer relationships on the development of children. Ladd and Price proceeded to support the view that children who had not developed the social skills necessary for positive peer relationships by early elementary school tended to be prone to peer rejection.

The Childcare Resource and Research Unit (1994) pointed out that longitudinal studies in the United States indicated a direct relationship between peer rejection in the early grades and the child's avoidance of school (*see also*Parker & Asher, 1987). Peer rejection was also directly related to the likelihood that the child would drop out of school before graduation. Thus, the existing research literature suggests that childcare experience prior to school entry has the potential to assist the child to develop social skills that enable him or her to adapt quickly to the developmental opportunities presented in the early grades of school. However, it must be noted that the attainment of these benefits was dependent on the quality of the childcare programme. If the childcare programme was of poor quality, the impact of the childcare experience might be negative, concluded the Childcare Resource and Research Unit (1994).

In a related study, the Childcare Resource and Research Unit discussed the transition to elementary school in terms of cognitive functioning, language skills, and academic readiness. It found that there was considerable research evidence to support the notion that cognitive functioning in early childhood education centres predicts success in school (Hess, Holloway, Dickson, & Price, 1984; Tizard, Blatchford, Burke, Farquhar, & Plewis, 1988; Ladd, 1990).

In terms of language skills, the Childcare Resourceand Research Unit (1994) asserted that children with good language skills were more successful in gaining entry into peer groups and maintaining their inclusion than children with poor language skills. On the other hand, Jacobs, Selig and White (cited in Childcare Resource and Research Unit, 1994) found no differences between children who had and had not been enrolled in childcare centres prior to kindergarten.

With regards to academic readiness and functioning, the Childcare Resource and Research Unit looked at a number of studies and reported a positive association between

childcare experience prior to school and children's academic readiness in kindergarten and academic functioning in grade one. Caughy, DiPietro, and Strobino (1994), cited by Childcare Resource and Research Unit (1994) and others, reported that children with childcare experience (prior to school entry) obtained higher scores on standard tests of reading readiness. Those children also had a better understanding of mathematical concepts (Caughy et al. 1994).

Bradby (1995) used the situation at Pleasant Street School in Ballarat, Australia, to illustrate the key elements for a successful transition programme. She identified many key elements including networking of early childhood teachers, discussion groups, organising kindergarten week, family gathering, and open days. The underlying philosophy in identifying these key elements included the view that the school should be ready for the child, not vice versa. This was in contrast to the existing research findings, which supported the position that the child should prepare to enter school, should learn school procedures, and should adapt to school conditions (*see*, for example, Bjorklund, 1988).

As part of a feedback consultation with stakeholders, following on from an interview study of employment and childcare arrangements among 60 New Zealand families with 5-year-olds who had recently started school, Podmore (1996) reported on information provided by 16 key early childhood, community, and policy groups. Interviews and consultations with these groups provided new insights into early childhood education and parents in paid employment. Specific findings included new information about the difficulties and benefits associated with work-based early childhood education in New Zealand, and the importance of having a range of early childhood services. Main issues which emerged were related to children's needs and valuing children; provision of high quality early childhood education services and parental choice; and inequality, resourcing, and the specific needs of the Pacific Islands early childhood centres.

Duncan (1993) found under-resourcing, poor pay and conditions, and low levels of training for many early childhood education workers, also citing research by Wylie (1992). Duncan examined the role of government in early childhood education in New Zealand. She postulated that the development and education of children was a continuous process, and good quality early childhood services contributed significantly to the child's successful transition to, and readiness, for school. She pointed out that the policy to locate early childhood education within the Ministry of Education recognised that early childhood education was an integral part of the education continuum and that care and education were inextricably intertwined.

Both New Zealand and international studies show that transition to school should also be studied from the point of view of the children's readiness for school (*see*, for example, Bjorklund, 1988). Bale (1993) examined the role of language in readiness for school, and asserted that each child's behaviour revealed different interest and different levels of communication. According to Bale, memories of positive language experience gave the child feelings of confidence and high self-esteem, competency, and control, and promoted a willingness to stay involved (*see also* Stipek, 1988; Benton, 1995).

Other research on the child's readiness for school proposed that the child's main responsibility on entering school was to learn to adapt to school life (Blenkin, 1992; Peters, 1998), or to become aware of the demands of school life (Jackson, 1987). Merritt and Dyson (cited in Peters, 1998) suggested further that the ease or discomfort of settling

into school was affected by the child's relationship with other people, including parents, teachers, and friends (*see also* Fields, 1997).

Blyth and Wallace (1988) investigated the difficulties of transferring written records from the nursery school to the primary school in a selected local authority in the United Kingdom. There is conflicting evidence in the literature about the importance of transferring such written records. Blyth and Wallace (1988) pointed out that, while written records and their transfer were vital to the child's development, nursery head teachers and primary school teachers had different views about record keeping and what should be transferred (*see also* Wallace, 1985; Blyth, 1986). On the other hand, Wallace (1985) indicated that primary teachers saw little value in transferring records except where a special needs child was involved.

Primary school teachers prefer to make up their own minds about the child's achievement. This appeared in line with the view of Cleave, Jowett, and Bate (1982), who pointed out that most primary school teachers did not use information passed on by nursery staff. Blyth and Wallace (1988) reported overwhelming support among nursery head teachers for written records to be kept and transferred to primary schools. However, there was also contrasting evidence that few nurseries actually passed on written records (Lomax, 1977; Moore & Sylvia, 1984).

Blyth and Wallace (1988) recommended that "nursery staff needed to learn more about what information was most used by infant teachers, and infant teachers needed to increase their understanding of what comprises nursery education" (p. 222). They argued that a need existed to break down professional and organisational divisions so that primary and nursery teachers could work together to use information which was essential for the child's transition to school. They suggested further that the early childhood curriculum should anticipate what happened in primary school, and the primary school curriculum should reinforce learning that occurs in early childhood education contexts. This would allow the two sectors to provide continuous learning for the child.

Hurst and Lally (1992) and Kagan (1994) for the United States, and Peters (1998) for New Zealand supported this view. These authors asserted that children came to school with much prior learning experience and that, in order to build on this foundation, school teachers needed to find out about children's interests, ideas, abilities, and experiences. Peters (1998) emphasised further the desire parents expressed for teachers to share information on the school and the children throughout the school year. She espoused a holistic approach to identifying and addressing the problems children encountered in transition to school. In addition, she supported Meisels's (1992) suggestion that it was essential to focus on a child's current skill accomplishments, knowledge, and life experiences, and follow them up with the teaching and learning of new concepts.

Despite this, some researchers noted a lack of liaison and/or consultation between the school and early childhood education settings (Collins & White, 1994). Writing about the New Zealand situation, Smith (1992) corroborated this view by stating that there were no formal links between early childhood services and primary school.

Smith, Inder, and Ratcliff (1993) demonstrated that, in New Zealand, early childcare experience was not associated with adverse effects on social behaviour in school, and disagreed with the negative effects reported by other researchers (e.g., Belsky, 1988). They reported that New Zealand children who had experienced extensive non-maternal

childcare early did not have different social behaviour from their peers who started kindergarten later.

In 1997, the Ministry of Education introduced nationally standardised assessment procedures for use with children entering school (*see* Gilmore, 1998). This package was published in English as School Entry Assessment (SEA) and in Maori as Aro Matawai Urunga-ā-Kura (AKA). The three assessment components of SEA/AKA are: Checkout/Rapua (numeracy); Tell Me/Ki Mai (oral language); and Concepts About Print/Nga Tikanga o te Tuhi Korero (literacy). SEA/AKA has three purposes:

- to provide teachers with reliable information about each child's understanding and competence in selected aspects of numeracy, oral language, and emergent literacy;
- to help schools decide how best to support their new entrants and evaluate their programmes in the light of identified needs; and
- to enable the Ministry of Education to build up a database and identify differing national patterns in numeracy, oral literacy, and emergent literacy on school entry.

Assessment is carried out in the language of instruction of the classroom when children have been at school for 4–8 weeks (Gilmore, 1998).

Williams and Dixon (1998) examined the School Entry Assessment kit (SEA) recently introduced into New Zealand schools to help schools assess the knowledge and skills of children entering school. They contended that SEA intended that both formative and summative assessment be undertaken (*see also* Ministry of Education, 1993, 1997). Formative assessment examined the cognitive processes involved in learning and was concerned with promoting and enhancing learning as learning occurred (Bell & Cowie, 1997). On the other hand, summative assessment was used mainly for communication purposes (Broadfoot, 1992), and for the measurement and reporting of achievement (Black, 1986). Williams and Dixon (1998) argued that the SEA approach ignored research evidence, which attested that a set of assessment information used for 2 or more purposes had inherent problems and could adversely affect the results of the assessment (Crooks, 1988; Broadfoot, 1992). They contended further that the SEA requirement to report summative data to the Ministry of Education could move assessment from low stakes to high stakes. Williams and Dixon reported that most of the schools they surveyed were using the SEA to supplement their own entrance assessment as well as for accountability purposes. They provided conflicting evidence about how the schools see SEA, with some schools presenting positive outcomes, some reporting negative feelings, and others indicating that they were not comfortable using SEA.

Klerfelt and Granеld (1994) examined the experience of children who moved from early childhood education to school in Sweden, and described how children perceived learning in different school cultures. Like Fabian (1994) and other researchers, they postulated that transfer from early childhood to school meant that a child passed from one culture of curriculum to a different one. While identifying similarities, they contended that the contents and methods of learning differ in the two cultures. This fitted in well with the views of Dalberg and Taguchi (1994). Klerfelt and Granеld found that the school culture and way of teaching were of prime importance to the child's ability to use and develop their early childhood learning experiences. They explained that if the learning approach in the school was totally different from the child's early childhood education experiences, the way of learning in early childhood settings was withdrawn and vice versa (*see also* Ka'ai,

1990). Richardson (1997) examined the transition from home or early childhood service to school in Australia and New Zealand. The author reviews the literature on issues such as entry age, type of classroom environment, the concept of continuity, and personal stress. Richardson pointed out that the concepts of development and learning "reflect the differences between a child's educational experiences at preschool and school" (p. 19). Richardson asserted that research on the impact of entry age and enrolment procedures on the successful transition to school was inconclusive, supporting the findings of Scott (1993).

Fletcher (1997) provided a case study of the Connect Redfern Inter-agency School Community Centre Pilot Project, which was located at Redfern Primary School in Australia. Fletcher dealt with the issue of helping young children in their transition to school. Similarly, Savage (1994, 1995) examined the problems, obstructions, and obstacles which children encounter in their transition to school in Australia, collecting, analysing, and presenting information on the children and their families as well as school professionals.

Parents', Communities', and Children's Perspectives

Evidence from the existing literature shows that the support and involvement of families is vital to successful transition to school, especially to optimise the child's gains from early childhood (Katz, 1984; Wolbers, 1997). Parr, McNaughton, Timperley, and Robinson (1993) pointed to the availability of considerable evidence to support the belief that parental participation in schools affected children's achievement and attitudes. Dickie (1998) focused on the reading aspects of emergent literary skills, and pointed out that children could learn a lot about reading before they began school if stories were read to them. The author discussed the value of prior book experience for children before they began formal school education. Stubbs (1988) highlighted 4 factors, including parental involvement, which contributed to the child's learning and development in Australia, namely,

- the language used by staff with the children,
- disciplinary and classroom management,
- the curriculum and programme, and
- integration of parents into the programme at all levels.

Stubbs's model of continuity stated that language, discipline, and curriculum were the 3 critical areas during transition to year 1, and should be kept as stable as possible. Stubbs argued further that if parents became an integral part of the early childhood programme, there was a greater likelihood of parental involvement being carried on throughout the primary school, with inherent benefits for the children and their education.

Similarly, Doherty (1996) discussed the long-term effects of non-parental childcare, while Woodhill, Bernhard, and Prochner (1992) demonstrated that collaboration between schools and home can have a highly beneficial effect on children's learning. They also espoused that teachers had responsibility for maintaining productive contacts with parents, reiterating the role of parents and their right to share in all school-related matters.

Bartholomew and Gustafsson (1997) used the case study of one child in the United Kingdom to demonstrate the usefulness of a positive parent-teacher relationship during transition from early childhood education to school. The transition of the child in their

study was not conducive to learning, according to the authors. The child found it difficult and hard to fit into the requirements of primary school. The case study showed the differences in attitude and practice between the nursery and the primary school, and how those differences hindered the child's achievement and transition to school. They indicated that the child made progress at nursery because of the good communication between the nursery and the child's mother, and that the lack of communication between the school and the child's mother adversely affected the child's transition.

Elliot (1998) studied the experiences of Australian working families as their children moved from early childhood settings to school. She reported positive experiences for the children in the study, although some children without peers or siblings encountered difficulties. She corroborated previous findings in the literature on factors which influenced successful adjustment to school. The first factor was that children had attended quality early childhood programmes for 3 years and participated in activities to prepare them for school. The second factor was for the children to know some other children at the school, including siblings or close friends. Elliot pointed out that there was a complex relationship between early childhood education experiences, the school setting, individual cognitive and social development and temperament, and parents' management of the transition.

Elliot (1998) reported further that parents' experiences were not generally positive. According to Elliot, parents' choice of schools was influenced by a number of factors, including proximity to home and/or work, accessibility of out-of-school care, and cost. She mentioned further that parents were active in ensuring that children were familiar with the school, school routines, and activities, and this enhanced the ability of the children to cope with the new school environment. She concluded that parents' difficulties in the transition related to family situations, especially family composition, working hours, distance between home and work place, socioeconomic status, and existing community and family support networks.

Elliot and Lambert (1985) observed that starting school was a major transition for young children and that children who were not well prepared for this transition encountered difficulties in settling into school. However, they pointed out that children who were well prepared and who knew what to expect would most likely have more confidence and would be happy at school. They mentioned that early childhood education teachers and parents could ease the potential confusion and discomfort of transition by preparing children for the changes to come. They identified ways in which parents could assist with their children's transition before and after they enter school. These included helping children to:

- develop feelings of confidence and familiarity in the school setting;
- maintain self-esteem;
- maintain positive, relaxed relationships at home;
- become self-reliant and assume a degree of responsibility for managing their lives;
- make real choices and day-to-day decisions.

Seefeldt, Galper, and Denton (1997) studied the American Head Start Programme and examined the interrelationships between children's conceptions and expectations and achievement in school. They reported small but significant correlations between children's conceptions of and expectations for school and their academic achievement. They

indicated that transitions could be difficult for all children but more so for young children, for whom transitions could be disruptive and hinder their ability to understand the school environment. Even so, they showed that children were generally optimistic in terms of their expectations for their future schooling.

Ledger, Smith, and Rich (1998) studied New Zealand children's perspectives on their transition from kindergarten to school, with emphasis on the changes and environmental factors involved in the transition. They agreed with other researchers that moving from early childhood education to school was a major transition in a child's life (*see also* Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Brewer, 1995). They followed a cohort of 16 children for 18 months, interviewing them at kindergarten, school, and at home. Their findings showed that roles, activities, and interpersonal relationships changed during the transition to school. They described how early childhood and school settings provided a very different developmental context for children, in relation to acceptable behaviour, and relationships with and support from teachers.

Citing Kenney (1992), Lombardi (1993), and Richardson (1997), Ledger, Smith, and Rich (1998) argued that a lack of continuity between early childhood and school contexts occurred because of differences in teaching styles, philosophy, and structure of the 2 levels of education. According to Ledger et al., the adverse impact of this lack of continuity was usually minimised where the children proceeded to the same school with friends they made in early childhood settings.

Richardson (1997) accepted the evidence in the literature supporting the notion that "the undesirability of sudden change in a child's life was acknowledged through the concept of continuity in early childhood" (p. 19) (e.g., Briggs & Potter, 1995). Richardson pointed out that, in Australia and New Zealand, few children moved directly from home to formal education, and that previous attendance at an early childhood centre was an important factor in a child's ability to settle successfully in school (*see also*Renwick, 1984; Edgar, 1987). Richardson lent support to the belief that a good relationship between the school and parents or home was essential for the child's successful transition to, and continuous progress at, school. Reasons given by Richardson for involving parents in school activities included the enhancement of home support for learning activities, bridging the gap between home and school culture, and improving teachers' perceptions of parents (Richardson, 1997, p. 20).

However, Ledger et al. (1998) agreed with the other school of thought, which claimed that the transition to school was generally not so traumatic for children (e.g., Donaldson, 1978). Only 2 children in the Ledger et al. study experienced extreme unhappiness and only 1 child expressed a wish to return to kindergarten. However, the authors conceded that transition could be difficult for some children, even if there were no obvious signs of unhappiness. They stated further, that, while the initial transition might be successful, negative attitudes to school could subsequently develop.

Other researchers pointed out that teachers' understanding of the children's home background could facilitate communication and learning as well as transition to school (Renwick, 1984; Cazden, 1988; Clay, 1991; Peters, 1998). Indeed, teachers have an important role in working with parents as well as children (Peters, 1998).

Peters reported on a New Zealand study about transition to school from home and early childhood centre, and indicated that parents tended to focus more on gathering data about

the school, the child's experiences, and progress as well as sharing information about their child. The study was undertaken in a large urban primary school with an enrolment of 500+ children in the North Island of New Zealand, and 3 early childhood centres. Even though 114 new entrant children were observed, the main child participants were the 7 case study children, and the parents of 23 children. Peters found that the opportunity for both parents and children to become familiar with the school layout, routine, and processes appeared to be an important factor in the transition to school (Peters, 1997).

The existing research findings point, therefore, to a need to facilitate a smooth transition for the child to enhance the child's learning and successful adaptation to the new environment (Fowler, Schwartz, & Atwater, 1991; Brewer, 1995). The research evidence also emphasised the importance of family involvement in achieving this objective. In this respect, Johnson, Chandler, Kerns, and Fowler (1986) stated that parents had much to offer and gain by becoming actively involved in their children's transition. They argued that parents could provide important information to professionals, teach the children at home, play advocacy role for the children, and provide social and emotional supports for other parents. Edgar (1986) provided evidence to indicate that transition to school could be eased if consideration was given to the role of parents, the need to avoid stereotypes, and the need to build on skills already acquired by the child.

Writing about New Zealand, Parr, McNaughton, Timperley, and Robinson (1993) suggested similar collaboration between home and school to enhance teaching and learning. According to Parr et al. (1993), the importance of parental involvement in schools in ensuring effective schooling could not be overemphasised. When parents encouraged and supported their school activities, children were advantaged. The authors supported previous research, which established a positive correlation between level of home and school contact and academic achievement. Epstein (1987, p.120), cited in Parr et al. (1993) concluded that "the evidence was clear that parental encouragement, activities, and interest at home and participation in schools and classrooms affected children's achievements, attitudes and aspirations, even if student ability and family socioeconomic status are taken into account".

Ebbeck and Glover (1998) examined the expectations of immigrant children and their families in South Australia. They pointed out that early childhood professionals should have an informed understanding of the experiences of the immigrant children they worked with, if the professionals were to provide culturally appropriate curriculum. They confirmed that immigrant families had different views from professionals about various aspects of early childhood education.

Julian (1987) evaluated special early childhood classes in primary schools in New Zealand, and pointed out that one of the main advantages of the early childhood class was the degree of parent involvement and the subsequent carry-over to primary school. She reported that parent involvement varied by school with many teachers feeling they need more training on parent participation, although the teachers identified areas where parents could assist with the early childhood and school work.

Wylie (1996) reported that New Zealand children whose parents read to them at least once a day scored about 8 percentage points more on literacy, and 7 percentage points more in mathematics, than those whose parents read to them less frequently. She pointed out further that, even if family income was taken into account, children who did more

activities (copying, writing, etc.) tended to be associated with higher levels of competency.

Green (1997) explored the perceptions of a small group of Adelaide children, recording what school meant to them before and after the transition from early childhood education. Green identified a number of expectations and understandings, and their implications for transition programmes. Green revealed the children's limited knowledge and understanding of the role of teachers and the teaching process, and encouraged parents and school professionals to consider the views of children to ensure effective transition to school (*see also* Margetts, 1997).

Socioeconomic Status

In the United States, Kontos, Howes, Shinn, and Galinsky (1997) studied children's experiences in family childcare and relative care in relation to family income and ethnicity. They compared provider behaviour, children's activities, and characteristics of the childcare environment using 186 African American, European American, and Latino children. They found that lack of resources and the structure of low-paid jobs tended to compel families to put their children into cheap or free childcare arrangements that were flexible to allow for evening, weekend, and irregular hours of care. Their findings corroborated the position of Hofferth (1995) that low-income families were less likely than moderate and upper income families to rely on centre-based childcare, and much more likely to rely on grandparents (*see also* Brayfield, Deich, & Hofferth, 1993; Kontos, Howes, Shinn, & Galinsky, 1994; Phillips, 1995).

It is also evident that low-income families using family childcare or relative care might be receiving lower quality care than higher income families (Kontos, 1994). However, Kontos et al. (1997) indicated that the few low-income families who enrolled their children in centre-based care received high-level care as high-income families. The results revealed that there were generally more similarities than differences in children's experiences in family care and relative care across various income groups. However, they also found some evidence that children's experiences in family and childcare varied by ethnicity and family income.

All low-income families (earning US$20,000 or less) haddifficulties obtaining quality childcare irrespective of ethnicity and type of care. Latino children were most likely to receive non-regulated relative care, and Latino families used lower quality care than African American and European American families, and this complemented earlier findings by Fuller, Eggers-Pierola, Holloway, Liang, and Rambaud (1995) and Fuller, Holloway, Rambaud, and Eggers-Pierola (1995).

Edgar (1986) explained that each new entrant to school came with a unique family background, resources, experiences, competencies, and expectations. He pointed out that with unemployment increasing in Australia and social security benefits falling, the proportion of families with incomes below the poverty line was increasing. He stated further that families with little or no money would have difficulty buying books, outings, adequate diets, housing, and health care for their children.

Meade (1997) produced mixed findings in relation to socioeconomic status and the child's development or adjustment to school in New Zealand. She confirmed the general notion in the literature that family income made a difference, particularly in relation to early literacy and early mathematics, and social skills with peers. She reported further that

income influences communication and social skills with adults. However, she found that mothers' paid employment made no difference. Meade also noted some differences regarding children's ethnicity, and whether English was their first language, and family structure.

Special Needs/Special Education

Newman (1995) described the transition process, attitudes, emotions, and views of families and professionals as they got involved in a framework of policies, management procedures, and decision-making. The participants contended that it was essential to have continuity in the education of the special needs child. Newman argued that it was essential to ensure continuity in the service the child was leaving and moving to, in terms of teaching and learning procedures, relationships and families, planning, and management of the transition itself.

Wartmann and Kindergarten (1997) examined transition to school of special needs children in New Zealand and indicated that the relationship between parents and professionals was important for a successful transition. They identified a number of attributes for a successful transition including:

- individualised, timely, systematic, and collaborative planning which involved all those working with the child;
- support for families to be actively involved in their child's transition and to have an equal partnership with professionals;
- the kindergarten and primary school working together to prepare and educate the child for integration into mainstream education; and
- provision of services which promote and support the child in the school setting.

Wartmann and Kindergarten (1997) therefore supported the common position in the literature that good relationships between parents of special needs children and the professionals who looked after them was vital for successful transition (*see*, for example, Newman, 1995; Barnes, 1995; Brewer, 1995). Many other researchers alluded to the difficulties that parents of children with disabilities encountered when the children move to school (Turnbull & Winton, 1983; Winton, Turnbull, & Blacker, 1984; Johnson et al., 1986). Many of these parents were required to make decisions about their children's education and confront a number of issues related to their children's disabilities. Brewer (1995) complemented this finding by pointing out that transitions were often stressful for many parents due to the changes in routine and situation (*see also* Fowler et al., 1991).

Barnes (1995) used 3 programmes in New South Wales to identify and discuss the structures which promote successful transition to school. Using the "Leapfrog Readiness for School Screening", "Preparation for School Classes", and Link-up Child Profiles" programmes, she emphasised the need to have structures in place to encourage collaborative work between agencies and skilled individuals. She argued that a structure did not have to be formal, but that there needed to be clear goals and expectations about the purpose of the contact between the agencies and the skilled individuals. According to Barnes, the structure should be meaningful to participants, flexible enough to meet changing needs, and well co-ordinated. Barnes contended that the most important outcome was to have an avenue for the sharing of ideas and expertise.

Beamish (1995) provided information on a research project which aimed to determine,

through participatory research, a validated listing of indicators of quality for the Queensland Department of Education's programmes for children aged under 5 years who had disabilities. She emphasised the need for the evaluation of early intervention programmes as a means of achieving quality assurance and greater efficiency in the provision of services to children with disabilities. She provided historical research evidence to support the position that the shortage of adequate and relevant programme evaluation measures persisted in Australia for decades and into the 1990s (*see also* Bickman & Weatherford, 1986; Hauser-Cram, 1990; Benner, 1992). Indeed, Dickin, McKim, and Kirkland (1983) observed the lack of a suitable design and evaluation framework for use by service providers and administrators of early intervention programmes.

There is evidence in the existing research to suggest that attempts to establish structures and an evaluation framework for early intervention (including special education services) usually occur within the context of best practice evaluations (De Stefano, Howe, Horne, & Smith, 1991; Beamish, 1995). Stokes (1995) examined the school experience of one special needs pupil, identifying the difficulties encountered, highlighting possible improvements in future transitions, and alluding to the need for ongoing support once the transition was completed. She explained that, for most children in transition to school, there was often a vast difference in programmes and activities and that it was important to rehearse activities for the new setting.

Stokes (1995) attested that, with the passing of the New Zealand Human Rights Act (1993) and the New Zealand Education Act (1989), many parents of children with disabilities were choosing to have their children educated in an inclusive setting. Using evidence from the United States, Ramey and Ramey (1998) reached similar conclusions. They explained that the passing of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (1974), had resulted in an increased demand to realise the ideals of an inclusive and equal education for children with disabilities (*see also* Ramey & Ramey, 1992).

Pinkerton (1991) summarised information on the roles of the United States Federal Government, the family, and teachers in preparing young children with disabilities for school. She argued that the passing of Public Law 99–457, the 1996 Amendments to the Education of the Handicapped Act, has tended to address the needs of young children with disabilities. She identified 2 programmes which assist in addressing the needs of those children. These were the Handicapped Infants and Toddlers Programme for children aged 0–2 years, and the Preschools Grants Programme for 3- to 5-year-olds. These programmes, she argued, represented an important effort to expand the scope of services available to American children with disabilities and their families.

Pinkerton supported the common notion in the literature for continuity in the child's education, and suggested that the sending teachers should find out what skills the child would need in order to function adequately in the new setting and implement a programme to enable the child to acquire those skills. She alluded to the need for parents to be seen as teachers, partners, decision-makers, and/or advocates (*see also* Shearer & Shearer, 1977). Pinkerton also stressed the important roles of both the sending and receiving teachers in the transition process and the vital importance of the 2 collaborating to ease the child's transition. Briggs and Potter (1990) and Collins and White (1994) observed that, in Australia, the most preparation for beginning school was made for children with special

needs. They pointed out that children with special needs received support and assistance many months before they moved to school.

Brewer (1995) discussed the transition experience of Australian children with disabilities and their families, focusing on parents' perceptions of problems in the transition to school. She argued that the theoretic shift in perspective towards a family-centred philosophy was a major consideration when it comes to planning transition for families of special needs children. She demonstrated that transition involved changes in service providers who might or might not share the same philosophy. This situation, she explained, puts parents and professionals under extra pressure and demands and could be difficult and time consuming (*see also* Rice & O'Brien, 1990; Pinkerton, 1991).

Bentley-Williams and Butterfield (1995) discussed the transition experiences of 3 families of children with disabilities in New South Wales. They highlighted the essential supports which families needed to minimise stress, and promote adjustment and satisfaction with the transition process. She reported that families wanted to play an active role in decisions affecting their children's transition to school, and that parents reported increased satisfaction with the transition process if they had an opportunity to share their concerns about their children's special needs. Communication and the opportunity to participate were, therefore, 2 high-priority areas for families of children with disabilities (Power, 1993; Rosenkoetter, Hains, & Fowler, 1994; Bentley-Williams & Butterfield, 1995). Bentley-Williams and Butterfield reported further that all the families wanted their children with a disability to be happy and independent, and have access to the best opportunity like any other children.

Fyffe and Kippen (1994) undertook a longitudinal study of the perceptions of families of young Australian children with disabilities who transit from early intervention to school. They reported the views of families about relevant support for children at various stages of development involved in the transition to school (*see also* Rouse, 1996).

Pacific Islands Early Childhood Services

Very little literature exists on the transition to school of Pacific Islands children. Candy and Butterworth (1998) examined the experience of migrant children in the first years of school in Australia. They argued that teachers needed to realise that, despite the similarities of some migrant children to Australian-born children, fundamental differences of the cultural and educational experiences of living in another country and migration might affect the migrant child's ability to cope with school in a new country. They argued further that teachers needed to make adequate use of the prior learning experiences of migrant children, and also help them adjust to the new settings. Even though their study was not directly on Pacific Islands children, the results have relevance for Pacific Islands children moving from early childhood to school.

McNaughton, Wolfgramm, and Afeaki (1996) investigated the impact on 7 Tongan families with 3- and 4-year-olds of using a culturally appropriate conversational/ ollaborative style of reading storybooks in the Tongan language to children aged under 5 years. They reported that culturally appropriate early childhood settings (specifically the Tongan-language early childhood centres used in their study) are powerful sites for family literacy. McNaughton et al. mention further that children dramatically increase their active participation in non-immediate talk and improve their understanding of concepts as a

result of this approach (*see also* Sulzby & Teale, 1991).

The findings of McNaughton et al. (1996) complement previous research on trialling the collaborative conversational approach by Tongan families (e.g., Gallimore & Goldenberg, 1993; McNaughton, 1995). In addition, McNaughton (1995) describes the cultural and social processes in the family activity of reading books with children aged under 5 years. He indicates that Pacific Islands families focus on recitation of text segments by children, with parents' ideas playing a vital role in the child's reading and learning (*see also* Morgan, 1993; May & Mitchell, 1993).

McNaughton et al. (1996) reported that their project also provided a vehicle for further training of 2 Tongan researchers. This was an additional outcome of their research, and they demonstrated how Ministry of Education contract research "can be used for the training of Pacific Islands researchers" (McNaughton et al., 1996, p. 34).

In their more recent report on studies focused on literacy, McNaughton, Parr, and Smith (undated) outlined further the impact of cultural processes on transition to school. The Strengthening Education project in Mangere and Otara is also providing information on the early literacy experiences of Pacific Islands children as they move from early childhood settings (MacDonald, McNaughton, Tamarua Turoa, & Phillips, 1999). MacDonald et al.'s (1999) work in progress describes the content and form of Pacific Islands children's narratives, and analyses teachers' guidance of children, drawing on Vygotsky's perspectives.

Ete (1993) discussed the role of the church and government in promoting early childhood education in Aotearoa/New Zealand. She pointed out that Pacific Islands people set up Pacific Islands education centres because of the inherent benefits of early childhood care and education. These included the support early childhood care and education provided to parents, the difference it made to children's ability to learn and to socialise, as well as the desire of Pacific Islands parents to ensure that their children had equal opportunity to education (*see also* Wolfgramm, 1992).

Ete explained that the rationale behind sending Pacific Islands children to Pacific Islands education centres was to allow the children to learn and socialise in the children's first language. Ete also examined the role of the church, emphasising the strong bond between Pacific Islands and the church. She stated further that, without the church, many Pacific Islands children, especially Samoans, would not have access to early childhood education in their own language. The importance of language in the child's learning was also emphasised by Benton (1993, 1995), who reported on a computer programme which facilitated or enhanced learning and teaching in Pacific Islands languages—Hawaiian, Tahitian, Samoan, etc.

Sauvao (1995) carried out an action research project on parental involvement in 2 Pacific Islands early childhood centres (one Samoan and one Tokelauan). She reported that many grandparents and parents took their children to the sessions and stayed till the end. Parents, after being given lesson demonstrations, became more involved in the children's learning activities, assisting with story telling, music, and games. Sauvao noted the close relationships between teachers and parents through the preparation of resources and the sharing of teaching responsibilities. She observed the lack of resources, and noted that the 2 early childhood centres in the study (1 Samoan and another Tokelauan), had only a few teachers, 2 teachers for 35 children in the Samoan early childhood education

centre, while 28 children in the Tokelauan early childhood centre had 1 teacher and 1 assistant teacher.

The study carried out by Sauvao (1999) in the Wellington region about the transition of ā'oga 'āmata (Samoan early childhood education centre) children showed that parents, teachers and principals viewed the transition from different perspectives. Parents generally saw Samoan language development as an important part of their children's education and firmly believed that the ā'oga 'āmata experience was a better option for their children than attendance at other kinds of early childhood centres. Teachers in English-only programmes, however, saw little difference between ā'oga 'āmata children and kindergarten children, showing that curriculum continuity was uppermost in their minds. In such schools, principals would usually advance administrative reasons as to why language continuity could not be fully achieved in their programmes. In only 1 school was there convergence of views on the importance of language continuity.

Language maintenance was actively supported by only one of the 14 schools in Sauvao's survey. For ā'oga 'āmata children attending the 13 other schools surveyed, the pathway was confined to the children's homes, networks in the community, and the church. Sauvao contended that, if the schools are to consider seriously the role of language continuity in the transition arrangements for ā'oga 'āmata children, there would need to be new initiatives in the resourcing of schools, the training of staff, and the development of school language policies. Only one of the 14 schools in her study appeared to take full advantage of the possibilities under present regulations and teacher training opportunities. Sauvao again emphasised that both ā'oga 'āmata and the primary school have responsibilities for the co-ordination of the education of children who choose to attend an early childhood education service in their home language.

Sauvao commented on the implications of the findings for transition programmes. Based on the perceptions of the various stakeholders in her study, there appeared to be a number of initiatives that could ease the transition from ā'oga 'āmata to primary school for Samoan children. First, Sauvao pointed out that there is a need to develop a goal for transition practices that is shared by staff at the ā'oga 'āmata, parents, and teachers at the receiving school. In setting goals, there would need to be a shared understanding of what is meant by transition to school and an awareness of the costs of not achieving continuity of experiences in a child's life. Second, she recommended that an agreed set of strategies to ensure continuity should be mandated, at least at the ā'oga 'āmata and school community level. Several domains of transition would need attention in the mandate: administrative co-ordination, curriculum continuity, parent involvement, language maintenance, professional development, and co-ordination among support services.

Sauvao proposed that lack of an agreed understanding of what is necessary for successful transition was the main issue encountered in her study. Stakeholders in the children's education were not overtly focused on the need to have policy, strategies, and standards to guide continuity, between home, ā'oga 'āmata, school, and community. She stated that, as early childhood educational provisions are at the discretion of the parents, it is important that choices are made for reasons of philosophy, quality, and value.

In addition, Sauvao made several suggestions for future research. She proposed that there is a need for longitudinal information on several cohorts of children as they pass through the ā'oga 'āmata and progress in their primary education. She suggested that these

children would need to be compared with a matched group of children who attend other services or who remain at home, and that the development of the comparison children would also need to be studied across a number of years. According to Sauvao, the language maintenance issue would need to be examined separately and with appropriate comparison groups. The complex nature of bilingualism and bilingual education would call for comprehensive data collection that monitored home and community variables as well as school factors in language development.

Sauvao commented that equity issues are important. She referred to the success of the kohanga reo movement, and the statistics from the Ministry of Education (1999) which outline the fast increase of Pacific Islands children's enrolment in early childhood education services, and questioned how the government allocates funds to the various government departments. Sauvao contends that the education sector does not seem to have equal distribution or sufficient allocation of funds for areas like Pacific Islands education.

Wolfgramm (1992) pointed out that the home-based Anau Ako Pasifika programme demonstrated the strengths of providing Pacific Islands children with early childhood education and experiences. She contended that the Anau Ako Pasifika programme prepared children for transition from home to school and provided Pacific Islands children with early contacts with books. She pointed out that Pacific Islands children who were on the programme were armed with reading skills by the time they went to school. She argued further that the experiences that Pacific Islands children gained from the Anau Ako Pasifika programme were carried over to school, and that this contributed to their successful transition to school (*see also* Morgan, 1993).

According to Wolfgramm, all the participants of the programme had been described by their teachers as confident in themselves and in the classroom environment. The importance of building on the prior experiences of children and particularly migrant children has been noted in the literature (*see*, for example, Simpson, 1997; Candy & Butterworth, 1998). Wolfgramm (1992) also complemented the existing notion in the literature that a good relationship between the school and home enhanced the child's transition to school (*see also* Renwick, 1984; Clay, 1991; Peters, 1998). Wolfgramm contended that schools should draw on the strengths and knowledge of the home in order to provide children with a better learning environment.

There is no shortage of literature on the importance of language and culture in facilitating the transition to school. Smith (1992) noted that Pacific Islands centres differed from kohanga reo in that their aim was not so much to revive a language as to preserve an already fluent language and traditional values. Writing about Australia, Woodhill, Bernhard, and Prochner (1992) observed that, during the period of transition to year 1, the 3 areas of language, discipline, and curriculum should be kept as stable as possible.

Milne and Clarke (1993) identified a need for the development of language profiles on children in childcare and early childhood programmes in Australia that could provide schools with a comprehensive picture of a child's development in languages and literacy. They pointed out that primary schools were basically monolingual and did not adequately consider the bilingual status of some young children, especially those from foreign cultures. (There are exceptions, for example in the Northern Territory where there are a large number of bilingual schools and those which function initially in a local indigenous language not English.) They demonstrated the significance of continuity with the child's

first language in the transition process by arguing that the maintenance of the child's mother tongue was of fundamental importance in the first 3 years of primary school.

Using case studies from bilingual projects on transition from early childhood to school in Australia, Seneviratne (1994) noted the importance of schools' continuing with the child's first language simultaneously with the primary school language of instruction. Seneviratne argued that this approach helped to avoid the breaks in the child's linguistic and cognitive development, and minimised the long-term deficits in the learning of immigrant children.

In a report on the review of curriculum for New Zealand schools, the then Department of Education acknowledged the importance of culture in early childhood education and the early years of school (Department of Education, 1987).

Similarly, Morgan (1993) provided a synthesis of evidence from the Anau Ako Pasifika programme to demonstrate the growing importance of language and culture in early childhood education, and how that could impact on future studies of the child. Morgan (1993) wrote: "we practise the use of natural materials, revitalising our own music and songs, revitalising our languages and giving the children confidence and competence to move into a Language Nest or to primary school" (p. 29). She summarised the importance of culture as follows: "The knowledge of one's own culture is so important for strengthening the person. For strengthening the child, the little boy, the sixteen year old boy who goes to high school, it strengthens him when he is able at a moment's notice, to sing, to speak, and to chant, to say poetry in his own language". Indeed, the importance of language and culture in the transition to school of Pacific Islands children cannot be overemphasised.

Clearly, there remains scope for an exploratory study to investigate the experiences of transition to school of children from different language-immersion Pacific Islands early childhood centres. From an ecological perspective, it is important that such a study should include the child, the family, the school, and the community context.

Research Questions

The research questions addressed in the present study centre on the different contexts for young Pacific Islands children—their home, their early childhood centre or programme, and school.

1. What are the similarities and differences between the contexts of home, school, and early childhood settings?
2. What are the aspirations, expectations, and views of parents, teachers, and children of these contexts?
3. How well do children make the transition between the contexts (as defined by the children themselves)?
4. How can the information collected in this study assist teachers and parents to facilitate transition across the 3 contexts? and, in particular—
5. How do schools continue to assist and support the home languages and cultures of Pacific Islands children starting primary school?
6. What is the language policy of the school (as stated in the charter)?

Summary

This chapter has outlined and discussed relevant literature on children's transition to school, with reference to Bronfenbrenner's and Vygotsky's theories, and on the experiences of Pacific Islands children and their families. Five research questions are raised, focused on children's transition from Pacific Islands early childhood centres to schools. To place the present study more specifically in a Pacific early childhood context, the next chapter outlines relevant demographic characteristics.

CHAPTER 2

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Brief Demographic Characteristics

According to the 1996 population census, there were 202,236 people in New Zealand who classified themselves as Pacific Islanders. They constituted about 6 percent of the population of New Zealand. Statistics New Zealand (1998b, p. 19) points out that 50 percent of all Pacific Islands peoples in New Zealand are Samoans, 23 percent from the Cook Island, 16 percent Tongan, 9 percent Niue, 4 percent Fijian, and 2 percent Tokelauan.

The Pacific Islands population of New Zealand is young. The results of the 1996 census show that 20.2 percent of all Pacific Islands males and 19.0 percent of all Pacific Islands females are aged under 15 years. These age proportions are generally consistent with those of previous censuses. For example, the proportion of Pacific Islands males aged under 15 years was 19.8 percent in 1991 and 20.4 percent in 1986. The corresponding proportions for Pacific Islands females were 18.9 percent in 1991 and 19.2 percent in 1986.

The proportion of Pacific Islands male population in the early childhood age group was 7.8 percent in 1996, 8.0 percent in 1991, and 7.3 percent in 1986. The proportion of Pacific Islands female population aged under 5 years was 7.3 percent in 1996, 7.5 percent in 1991, and 6.8 percent in 1986.

Enrolment Patterns and Trends

Early childhood education regular enrolments in 1998 by ethnicity, gender, and types of service are presented in table 1. Pakeha total enrolments were the highest (57,511 males and 54,164 females), followed by Maori (15,436 males and 14,262 females), Pacific Islands (5,229 males and 4,955 females), and other ethnic groups (4,412 males and 4,160 females). Thus, of the 160,129 children enrolled in early childhood education in 1998, 69.7 percent were Pakeha, 18.5 percent Maori, 6.4 percent Pacific Islands, and 5.4 percent other ethnic groups. These proportions, by and large, reflect the proportion of the various ethnic groups in the population of New Zealand.

Table 1

Summary of Children on Regular Rolls of Early Childhood Education by Ethnicity and Service Type, 1998

	Pakeha		Maori		Pacific Islands		Other Ethnic Groups		Total
Type of Service	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	All sexes
Kindergarten	16747	16134	3538	3264	1647	1564	1739	1674	46307
Playcentres	7469	6782	891	817	162	156	284	226	16787
Education and care centres	26108	24540	3943	3638	1583	1379	2034	1980	65205
Home-based services	3577	3265	559	428	61	60	189	161	8300
Correspondence School	389	350	71	67	2	1	5	2	887
Te kohanga reo	30	40	5987	5632	-	-	-	-	11689
ECD-funded playgroups/centres	3173	3032	241	223	42	37	140	106	6994
P.I. language groups	18	21	22	16	1732	1758	21	11	3599
Total	57511	54164	15436	14262	5229	4955	4412	4160	160129

Source: Compiled from data obtained from the Ministry of Education

The number of Pacific Islands children enrolled in early childhood services increased by 71.5 percent between 1990 and 1998, from 5,937 in 1990 to 10,184 in 1998 (table 2). Table 2 shows the number of Pacific Islands children enrolled in various early childhood education services. For example, enrolment of Pacific Islands children in Pacific Islands language groups increased steadily from 2,553 in 1990 through 3,591 in 1992 to the highest level of 3,900 in 1994, before declining slightly to 3,490 in 1998. Enrolment of Pacific Islands children in kindergartens increased steadily from 2,100 in 1990 to 3,211 in 1998, while Pacific Islands enrolment in childcare increased significantly from 796 in 1990 to 2,025 in 1998, an increase of about 187 percent.

Table 2

Number of Pacific Islands Children Enrolled in Early Childhood Education by Service Type, 1990–1998

Type of Service	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Kindergarten	2100	2400	2503	2762	2701	2935	2928	3060	3211
Playcentres	302	296	306	356	329	326	275	314	318
Childcare centres	796	795	1035	1368	1281	1466	1640	1798	2025
P. I. childcare centres	-	-	-	-	510	694	813	858	937
Kohanga reo	-	-	-	-	-	100	67	38	-
ECD-funded playgroups	84	140	163	201	338	209	175	156	79
P. I. language groups	2553	3077	3591	3782	3900	3673	3654	3264	3490
Home-based services	-	41	92	127	132	141	145	143	121
Correspondence School	2	4	3	3	0	0	1	2	3
Total	5937	6753	7693	8599	9191	9544	9698	9637	10184

Source: Ministry of Education Data Management Division

During 1990–98, the least used early childhood service by Pacific Islands children was the Correspondence School, where the highest enrolment during the entire 9-year period was 4 in 1991. Early Childhood Development Unit-funded playgroups and home-based services also recorded comparatively lower enrolment levels (tables 2 and 3).

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Table 3

Proportion of Pacific Islands Early Childhood Students by Service Type, 1990–1998

Type of Service	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Kindergarten	35.4	35.5	32.5	32.1	29.4	30.8	30.2	31.8	31.5
Playcentres	6.8	4.4	4.0	4.1	3.6	3.4	2.8	3.3	3.1
Childcare centres	13.4	11.8	13.5	15.9	13.9	15.4	16.9	18.7	19.9
P. I. childcare centres	-	-	-	-	5.5	7.3	8.4	8.9	9.2
Kohanga reo	-	-	-	-	-	1.0	0.7	0.4	-
ECD-funded playgroups	1.4	2.1	2.1	2.3	3.7	2.2	1.8	1.6	0.8
P. I. language groups	43.0	45.6	46.7	44.0	42.4	38.5	37.7	33.9	34.3
Home-based services	-	0.6	1.2	1.5	1.4	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.2
Correspondence School	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Ministry of Education Data Management Division

Data in table 3 show that the largest single early childhood service used by Pacific Islands children during 1990–1998 was Pacific Islands language groups. The Pacific Islands enrolment in Pacific Islands language groups was 43.0 percent in 1990, and this increased to a maximum of 46.7 percent in 1992 before declining to 34.3 percent in 1998. Despite the decline in the proportion of Pacific Islands enrolment in language groups between 1992 and 1998, these groups consistently remained the largest single service type used by Pacific Islands early childhood children during the 1990–98 period. Consistently high proportions of Pacific Islands enrolments occurred in kindergartens (35.4 percent in 1990 and 31.5 percent in 1998), and in childcare centres (13.4 percent and 19.9 percent).

Even though the highest proportion of enrolments was in Pacific Islands language groups, the largest gain in enrolment proportions was recorded in childcare centres which increased by 6.5 percentage points from 13.4 in 1990 to 19.9 in 1998. The 1998 proportion of 19.9 percent also shows an increase of 48.5 percent over the 1990 proportion of 13.4 percent, indicating that the proportion enrolled in childcare centres increased by almost 50 percent during the 1990–1998 period. It should also be mentioned that the proportion of Pacific Islands children enrolled in playcentres declined by 54.4 percent, from 6.8 percent in 1990 to 3.1 percent in 1998, while the proportion enrolled in ECD-funded playgroups declined from 1.4 percent to 0.8 percent during the same period.

Enrolments by Gender and Service Type

The number and proportion of Pacific Islands early childhood enrolments by service type and gender for 1997 and 1998 are presented in table 4. A total of 9,638 Pacific Islands children enrolled in early childhood education in 1997. Of these 4,907 or 50.9 percent were males and 4,731 or 49.1 percent were females. Of the 4,907 Pacific Islands male children enrolled in early childhood education in 1997, 1,655 or 33.7 percent were enrolled in Pacific Islands language groups, compared with 31.6 percent in kindergartens, 28.0 percent in childcare centres, and 3.1 percent in playcentres. The lowest enrolment of only 2 was recorded in the Correspondence School.

Table 4

Pacific Islands Early Childhood Enrolments by Service Type and Gender, 1997 and 1998

Type of Service	1997				1998			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
	Number	*%*	*Number*	*%*	*Number*	*%*	*Number*	*%*
Kindergarten	1550	31.6	1510	31.9	1647	31.5	1564	31.6
Playcentres	153	3.1	161	3.4	162	3.1	156	3.1
Childcare centres	1376	28.0	1280	27.1	1583	30.3	1379	27.8
Te kohanga reo	23	0.5	15	0.3	-	-	-	-
ECD-funded playgroups	75	1.5	81	1.7	42	0.8	37	0.7
P. I. language groups	1655	33.7	1613	34.1	1732	33.1	1758	35.5
Home-based services	73	1.5	70	1.5	61	1.2	60	1.2
Correspondence School	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Total	**4797**	**100**	**4748**	**100**	**5229**	**100**	**4955**	**100**

Source: Ministry of Education Data Management Division

While there were variations in the number and proportions of Pacific Islands female children enrolled in different services, the pattern was similar to that of the male children. The highest enrolment of 1,613 (34 percent) was in Pacific Islands language groups, followed by 1,510 (31.9 percent) in kindergartens, 1,280 (27.1 percent) in childcare centres, and the lowest was in the Correspondence School.

Table 4 shows further that the enrolment of Pacific Islands children in early childhood services increased from 9,638 in 1997 to 10,184 in 1998, an increase of 5.7 percent. Despite this increase, the patterns of service use by type and gender were similar to those of 1997. Of the 10,184 Pacific Islands children enrolled in early childhood education in 1998, 5,229 or 51.3 percent were males and 4,995 or 48.7 percent were females. Like the 1997 pattern, the highest enrolments occurred in Pacific Islands language groups, 1,732 or 33.1 percent and 1,758 or 35.5 percent for males and females respectively. High enrolments were also recorded for both males (31.5 percent) and females (31.6 percent) in kindergartens, and in childcare centres (30.3 percent for males and 27.8 percent for females). The lowest enrolment was in the Correspondence School where only 2 male children and 1 female child were enrolled in 1998.

Table 5 provides comparative information on Pakeha early childhood education enrolment by gender and service type. In contrast to the Pacific Islands enrolment pattern, most Pakeha children enrolled in childcare centres in both 1997 and 1998. In 1997, 42.4 percent of Pakeha male children and 42.1 percent of the female children enrolled in childcare centres. The corresponding proportions for 1998 were 45.4 percent for males and 45.3 percent for females respectively. As expected, the proportion of Pakeha children enrolled in Pacific Islands language groups is comparatively lower than the proportion for Pacific Islands children.

It is interesting to note that, for both Pacific Islands and Pakeha children, the second largest enrolment occurred in kindergartens. Another area where the Pacific Islands and Pakeha enrolments converged was the Correspondence School where both groups recorded very low enrolment proportions irrespective of gender.

Table 5

Pakeha/European Early Childhood Enrolments by Service Type and Gender, 1997 and 1998

Type of Service	1997				1998			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
	Number	*%*	*Number*	*%*	*Number*	*%*	*Number*	*%*
Kindergarten	17226	29.0	16458	29.7	16747	29.1	16134	29.8
Playcentres	7700	13.0	7079	12.8	7611	13.2	6926	12.8
Childcare centres	25147	42.4	23305	42.1	26108	45.4	24540	45.3
Te kohanga reo	62	0.1	52	0.1	30	0.1	10	0.0
ECD-funded playgroups	5500	9.3	5069	9.2	3031	5.3	2888	5.3
P.I. language groups	12	0.0	11	0.0	18	0.0	21	0.0
Home-based services	3263	5.5	2989	5.4	3577	6.2	3265	6.0
Correspondence School	402	0.7	364	0.7	389	0.8	350	0.6
Total	**59312**	**99.9**	**55327**	**100**	**57511**	**100**	**54164**	**99.8**

Source: Computed from data from Ministry of Education Data Management Division

Pacific Islands Enrolment by Ethnicity

This study of Pacific Islands transition to school examines the experiences of children with origins from individual Pacific Islands countries, including Cook Island, Niue, Samoa, Tokelau, and Tonga. Table 6 presents numerical information of Pacific Islands children from various countries and the pattern of usage of early childhood education services.

Table 6

Pacific Islands Early Childhood Students by Service Type and Ethnicity, 1998

Type of Service	Samoan	Cook Islands	Tongan	Niue	Fijian	Toke-lauan	Other	Total
Kindergarten	1558	503	602	195	121	110	122	3211
Playcentres	117	72	36	31	20	7	35	318
Education and care centres	968	356	201	153	141	39	167	2025
P. I. childcare centres	619	115	79	46	46	4	28	937
Kohanga reo	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
ECD-funded playgroups	35	15	19	-	2	4	4	79
P. I. language groups	1296	524	1028	376	25	198	43	3490
Home-based services	34	27	3	2	4	-	51	121
Correspondence School	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3
Total	**4627**	**1612**	**1968**	**803**	**359**	**362**	**453**	**10184**

Source: Ministry of Education Data Management Division

Data in table 6 show that, of the 10,184 Pacific Islands children enrolled in early childhood education in 1998, 4,627 or 45.4 percent were Samoans, compared with 15.8 percent for Cook Islands, 19.3 percent Tongan, 7.9 percent Niue, 3.6 percent Tokelauan, 3.5 percent Fijian, and 4.4 percent other Pacific Islands. The high proportion of Samoan

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enrolment largely reflects the large proportion of Samoans in the Pacific Islands population in New Zealand.

There are ethnic variations in the number of Pacific Islands children enrolled in the different types of early childhood services. Samoan children recorded the largest enrolment for every type of early childhood service in 1998, except home-based services. A significant number of Samoan children (1,558 or 33.7 percent of Samoan early childhood enrolment) enrolled in kindergartens. The service type with the largest enrolment in 1998 was Pacific Islands language group for Cook Islands, Tongan, Niue, and Tokelauan children, and education and care centres for Fijian children. For all ethnic groups, the lowest enrolment in 1998 was recorded for the Correspondence School (table 6).

Pacific Islands Language Groups

As stated previously, Pacific Islands language groups were the most widely used early childhood service during the 1990–98 period. This presupposes a need to examine in detail the enrolment trends for this service type by the ethnicity of the children.

Table 7

Enrolments in Pacific Islands Language Groups by Ethnicity, 1990–1998

Ethnic group	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Cook Islands	331	319	495	620	604	565	607	627	524
Fijian	38	53	46	19	12	7	13	3	25
Niue	467	442	445	452	443	422	468	433	376
Tokelauan	167	235	222	202	221	181	211	165	198
Tongan	342	473	504	795	914	1064	1084	934	1028
Samoan	1199	1555	1879	1694	1706	1434	1271	1105	1296
Other ethnic group	185	197	91	95	82	36	82	98	152
Total	2729	3274	3682	3877	3982	3709	3736	3365	3599

Source: Ministry of Education Data Management Division

While Pacific Islands language groups was the leading service type used by Pacific Islands early childhood education children between 1990 and 1998, variations in enrolment levels by ethnicity are discernible from table 7. Tongan children recorded the largest percentage increase in enrolment in Pacific Islands language groups during the 1990–98 period (200.1 percent), followed by Cook Islands (58.3 percent), Tokelauan children (18.6 percent), and Samoan children (8.1 percent). The importance of language in the transition of Pacific Islands children to school has been noted in the research literature (*see*, for example, Ete, 1993, and McNaughton et al., 1996), hence the increasing enrolments in this service type by children from some ethnic groups.

It is appropriate to mention that a few ethnic groups recorded declining enrolments in language groups between 1990 and 1998, with the largest decline recorded for Fijian children (–34.2 percent), and Niue children (–19.5 percent).

Table 8 shows Pacific Islands early childhood enrolments in the areas covered by the Wellington and Auckland Regional Councils by ethnicity and gender, and reveals regional differences. Total Pacific Islands early childhood enrolments in Auckland were higher than in Wellington for all ethnic groups and gender except Tokelauan early childhood

enrolments. There were 2,095 males and 1951 females enrolled in early childhood education in Auckland in 1998, compared with 607 males and 520 females in Wellington. This can be attributed generally to the Pacific Islands population of the 2 regional council areas. Enrolment of Tokelauan children in early childhood education was higher in Wellington (40 males and 34 females) than in Auckland (15 males and 7 females).

Table 8

Pacific Islands Early Childhood Enrolments by Ethnicity, Wellington and Auckland Regional Council Areas, 1998

Ethnic group	Wellington		Auckland	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Cook Islands	112	85	298	266
Fijian	20	15	101	80
Niue	11	8	196	159
Tokelauan	40	34	15	7
Tongan	25	38	349	349
Samoan	383	314	1014	1003
Other P I ethnic group	16	26	122	87
Total	**607**	**520**	**2095**	**1951**

Source: Ministry of Education Data Management Division

Summary

This chapter has outlined the demographic characteristics of Pacific Islands children participating in early childhood education in New Zealand. Information is provided across service types and with reference to specific Pacific ethnic/language groups. The data show some regional variations in enrolments for different Pacific groups.

The demographic data presented to date suggest that, in the Wellington region, there is a disproportionately high number of Tokelauan children and a low number of Niue children, compared with the Auckland region which shows reverse trends. The next chapter describes the methods used in the present study. This is a small-scale exploratory study carried out in the greater Wellington region.

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CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This small-scale, exploratory study was carried out in the greater Wellington region. Data were collected through interviews with parents, teachers, and children themselves, about their transition to school. It was planned that each child's early childhood teacher and primary school teacher would be interviewed. The intention was to provide a primarily qualitative account of the experiences of families and teachers, focusing on language and other aspects of young children's movement from Pacific Islands early childhood centres into English-language primary schools.

Sample

The study was designed to include approximately 30 children moving from a Pacific Islands early childhood provision (with or without concurrent use of other services). Stratified sampling was used, with the aim of including 6 families from each of 5 ethnic groups. The rationale for this approach was related to the directive received from the project advisory committee that wherever possible all Pacific early childhood groups be represented equally, including groups with quite small numbers of children. The use of stratified sampling also ensured that groups where maintenance of the language is at risk, for example the Niue and the Cook Islands groups, participated.

Children

The sample includes children who had attended Pacific Islands language groups (PILGs) as well as licensed and chartered centres. The participating families were contacted via the PILGs and the Pacific Islands early childhood centres. The children were 5 years old, and first entered primary school in January/February 1999, or during the last months of the 1998 school year.

Children from these ethnic groups participated: Cook Islands, Niue, Samoan, Tongan, and Tokelauan. Six children participated from all ethnic groups except the Niue group, where only 3 eligible children were available to participate. For both the Niue group and the Tongan group, the complete population who met the age criteria was included. Several children were described as belonging to more than 1 Pacific ethnic group. The Cook Islands sample included 2 families with 1 New Zealand Maori parent, and 3 families with 1 Pakeha parent. All parents in the Samoan sample were Samoans. The Tokelauan sample included 1 family with a New Zealand Maori parent, and 1 family with a Pakeha parent. The Tongan sample had 1 family with one Cook Islands parent. Two of the 4 families in the Niue sample had 1 Niue parent and 1 Samoan parent.

Sixteen of the children were girls and 11 were boys. The children were aged between 5 years and 5 years 8 months at the time when they were interviewed.

The number of children in each family ranged from 1 to 6, with a mean of 2.96. This is somewhat above the national average of 1.95 (in 1996, Statistics New Zealand, 1998a).

The birth order of the children ranged from first- to fifth-born, with a disproportionately high percentage of first-borns (40.7 percent). There were 11 first-born

children, 6 second-born, 5 third-born, 1 fourth-born, and 4 fifth-born.

These relatively large family sizes are consistent with national trends. These show, for example, that 24 percent of Pacific Islands women aged 15 years and over have given birth to 4 or more children, in comparison with 17 percent of women over 15 years in the total New Zealand population (Statistics New Zealand, 1998b).

Parents

Parents of all of the 27 children were interviewed. The parents included 15 mothers who were interviewed alone, 4 fathers interviewed alone, and 8 mothers and fathers interviewed together.

The parents were aged between 21 and 50 years. The most common age bracket was 31 to 40 years (51 percent of parents), followed by 21 to 30 years (30 percent), and 41 to 50 years (22 percent).

Early Childhood Teachers

Teachers from 11 Pacific Islands early childhood centres participated. All of the teachers who were interviewed at the centres were women. The ages of the majority of early childhood teachers fell in the 41 to 50 bracket.

Six of the 11 spoke Samoan, 5 of the 11 spoke Tokelauan, 2 spoke Tongan, 2 Cook Islands Maori, 2 Niue. All spoke some English, with 10 of the 11 describing themselves as speakers of English.

School Teachers

In total, 19 primary schools participated, and 22 school teachers were interviewed. All 22 school teachers were women.

Nineteen of the teachers (86 percent) identified themselves as Pakeha/European, and 3 as Maori. The majority of teachers were aged 21 to 40 years. Eight teachers were aged 21 to 30 years, followed by 6 aged 31 to 40 years, 3 aged 41 to 50 years, and 5 aged 51 to 60 years.

All of the 22 school teachers spoke English fluently. In addition, 2 spoke both English and Maori, while 1 spoke Samoan and English.

Schools

The 19 primary schools were located in the greater Wellington region across a wide range of suburbs. School decile information was obtained from the Ministry of Education.

Decile ranking is a system of classifying schools by the socioeconomic status of households in the geographic vicinity of schools. Neighbourhoods are ranked and then broken into 10 equal-sized groups with 1 representing the lowest and 10 the highest socioeconomic categories.

The school decile rankings ranged from decile 1 to decile 9. The sample has a disproportionate number of children attending schools in the lowest socioeconomic stratum. Eleven (40.74 percent) of the children attended schools with a decile rating of 1, whereas none of the children attended a school with a decile rating of 10. The median was

3. (These data for Pacific Islands children contrast with the Competent Children study, where a disproportionate 29 percent of the children attended decile 10 schools, and the median was 7—Wylie & Thompson, 1997).

The schools involved in this study were then grouped into 4 categories as follows:

- Group A: <8 percent P.I. children at the school
- Group B: 9–14 percent P.I. children at the school
- Group C: 15–29 percent P.I. children at the school
- Group D: 30+ percent P.I. children at the school.

Five of the 19 schools in this study fell into category Group A, and these schools have a decile range of 5–9. Four of the 19 schools fell into category Group B and have a decile range of 3–9. Only 1 school fell into Group C and is a decile 4. The remaining 9 schools fell into Group D and have a decile range of 1–3. This shows an overall trend for the schools with higher percentages of Pacific Islands children to be in the lower socioeconomic strata.

Procedures

Ethics

The research was conducted in line with NZCER's Statement of Ethics (1998). This safeguards the research participants' confidentiality, informed consent, and right to discontinue participation at any stage in the research. The purpose of the interviews was explained to all participants. Informed consent was sought in writing from early childhood teachers, school principals, parents (on behalf of themselves and their child, with translations), and orally from the children who were aged 5 years.

The participation of the national organisations and their nominated field researchers linked the project back into the communities represented. A series of research training meetings developed into a collaborative process for planning and facilitating research by the 5 Pacific groups. During the meetings the NZCER ethics screening checklist was used as a tool for checking and reflecting on the cultural appropriateness of the procedures, for example with regard to consent and confidentiality. The process of involving the 5 field researchers from 5 different Pacific Islands communities provided connections between the research and their communities.

Advice on Research Processes

A first meeting of the advisory committee was held in December 1998 to discuss the details of the proposal, recent literature, the key elements in the research, and relevant Pacific Islands methodology. A number of alternatives were presented to the advisory committee for consideration. Subsequently, minor modifications were made to the draft research proposal in accordance with the recommendations of the advisory committee. Modifications made to the proposal included developing and refining the sampling and the methodology. The methodology followed appropriate cultural values and practices as specified in Sauvao (1999). Further details of the way in which these practices were applied are provided in greater detail in the following sections on interview procedures.

Training and Piloting Procedures

A co-ordinator and a team of field researchers were appointed in consultation with the national associations: Samoan, Tongan, Cook Islands, Tokelauan, and Niue. A series of consultation/training meetings were held to develop the processes and the interview questions. It was agreed that children from the above 5 ethnic groups would participate in the project.

Interview schedules were drafted for parents, new entrant school children, and teachers (early childhood and new entrant primary school). Prior to piloting the interviews, the draft interview schedules were circulated to members of the advisory committee for comments and suggestions, to ensure the questions were appropriate for the groups represented.

The questions were trialled/piloted with an early childhood teacher, a parent, and a child from each of the 5 ethnic groups. Training of the interview team and piloting/trialling of the interviews with parents, children, and early childhood teachers were carried out over a period of several months.

It was agreed that 1 child from each ethnic group in Wellington (including Porirua and the Hutt Valley) be involved in the pilot study. To be in the pilot study, the child had to have turned 5 and started school late 1998 or in 1999, and have attended a Pacific Islands early childhood centre.

Five ethnic Pacific Islands early childhood centres (1 for each ethnic group) were approached, and an outline of methods for selecting children was proposed. The centres provided the child's name. Once the child was selected, a letter and a consent form was sent to their parents, seeking their agreement to take part in this pilot study. On receiving confirmation of their consent, a time was set up to perform the interview with the child and the parents. The interviews were to be performed after school at their home. The understanding was that those children involved in the pilot study were not to be included in the main study. An early childhood teacher and the child's parents were also interviewed.

Numerous decisions were reached in the process of the planning meetings held before, during, and after the piloting. Some examples of the types of decisions made are listed below.

- Times and venues (the interviews with children, for example, were to be held at home, outside school hours).
- Siblings and other family members would be present at the interviews where requested.
- Establishing a rapport with the child (prior to asking any questions, time would be spent with each child establishing a rapport while the child engaged in spontaneous play or other activities).
- Wording of the questions (every question in each questionnaire was discussed at continuing project meetings, and, as part of the pilot study, consensus was reached on the wording and re-wording of questions).

All interviewers were very experienced at working with and relating to young children.

Access Negotiations

Wherever possible, it was intended that 6 families would participate from each of the 5 ethnic groups. It was planned that, where feasible, the families would be contacted through 2 early childhood centres for each of the ethnic groups. Both licensed and unlicensed centres were included, but it was intended that the participating unlicensed centres would be working towards licensing. Intensive access negotiations were needed for each of the 5 ethnic groups.

The supervisors at 11 Pacific Islands early childhood centres provided names of children who were eligible to participate. The research team contacted the children's parents by letters written in English and the appropriate Pacific language. Examples of the letters seeking consent to participate are provided in appendix A. These letters include translations for 4 of the Pacific languages. Letters for the Cook Islands sample were all in English, because the parents were New Zealand born and spoke English.

After the researchers received written permission from the parents for their own and their children's participation, the team commenced access negotiations with the principals of the primary schools the children attended. Each child's early childhood teacher and school teacher was invited to participate in an interview. The principal at each participating school was asked to provide a copy of the school's charter.

All of the Pacific Islands early childhood centres and primary schools approached accepted the invitation to participate. The field workers reported 2 cases where parents were hesitant about participating. Where possible, a replacement family was found and included in the sample.

Contacting and Interviewing Parents: Cultural Practices

Prior to delivering letters of intent and consent, face-to-face interactions were used with some of the native speakers of Tokelauan, Cook Islands Maori, Niue, Tongan, and Samoan. The interviewers built into the meeting procedures with the various informants several culturally appropriate practices. As Pacific Islands researchers it was appropriate to conduct interviews while sitting on the mat with the parents and grandparents, i.e., to fit in with the family—their culture and routines. For cultural sensitivity reasons, the interviewers did not ask to tape-record the interviews. Researchers noted that there were "intrusions" into the interview process, for example, phone ringing, unexpected visitors, children running in and out of the room—and that while these intrusions made the interview more difficult to conduct—they were unavoidable and it was important to accommodate them. It was also important to conduct the interview in the interviewee's own language, and the researcher would do this even though the questions in front of them were written in English—hence interpretation was needed. The next sections describe culturally appropriate practices for each of the 5 Pacific Islands groups.

Culturally Appropriate Practices: Samoan Sample

Culturally appropriate practices included observance of fa'a Samoa and fa'aaloalo (respect) together with the acknowledgment of intrusion, farewell, and appreciation speeches.

In conducting the interview with parents, cultural values were observed. The use of formal language (matai language) was appropriate for the Samoan grandparents and

parents who were matai (titular chiefs). For example, the meetings would begin with the exchange of cultural greetings including the fa'alupega (cultural honorific) acknowledgment of the family and its chiefly titles. Face-to-face introduction of the researcher, casual discussion of the families tupuaga (genealogy), and positive talk about the child and the family's role in early childhood education would then precede the actual interview. A brief explanation of the purpose of the interview is important. This process is vital when carrying out research in the Samoan community.

Tupuola (1993) in her study of adolescence, also emphasised the imperative, culturally sensitive approaches that ought to be addressed in carrying out research concerning ethnic groups. This issue was at times disregarded when some of the non-Pacific Islands researchers undertook research projects both overseas and in these communities within New Zealand.

The interview questions were asked in a conversational rather than inquisitorial manner. On occasions, respect suggested that the interview be suspended for family events that arose during the scheduled time. On several occasions, the duration of interview time was extended because of interruptions of unexpected visitors, phone calls, meal times, environmental noise within the house, and disruptive behaviour of young children not involved in the interview.

The placement of people during the interview observed the cultural preference of using the mat. For example, in contacting 1 set of parents in 1 family, the grandparent (matai/titled father) greeted the researcher while sitting on the mat. This was the cultural way of respecting visitors. In return, the researcher also sat on the mat and interacted with both the parents and grandparents, although they insisted that she use the chair. Leave-taking observed the values of lauga fa'afetai/fa'amavae (thank you and farewell speeches) and fesoasoani (help/obligation).

The parents were given the language choice of either English or Samoan, whichever they felt comfortable with, in carrying out the interview processes. Two of the Samoan parents were interviewed using English, 1 set of parents chose to be interviewed in both English and Samoan, and the rest were interviewed using only Samoan language.

Culturally Appropriate Practices: Cook Islands Sample

The interviewer observed akonoanga akangateitei (respect), as well as acknowledging intrusions, expressing appreciation, and making appropriate farewells.

Cultural values were observed. The interviewer sat wherever the parents requested, so that they were comfortable. This included, for example, in the kitchen, the dining room, or outside in the garden.

The interviewer planned to use the language appropriate to the parents, and where appropriate, to leaders in the community. In practice, parents of the Cook Islands children were interviewed using English language only as they were New Zealand born, and 5 of the 6 families were mixed (2 with a Maori parent, and 3 with a Pakeha parent).

Culturally Appropriate Practices: Tongan Sample

Malo e lelei (Tongan Greeting)

Before interviewing the parents in the study, the researcher/interviewer made contact with key personnel of the Tongan community who then notified the parents involved in the

study, detailing the purpose of the interview. The researcher/interviewer then contacted the parent(s) to make an appointment for an appropriate time to perform the interview.

It is very common that when a seat or chair is offered to another Tongan, the visitor most often opts to sit on the floor in the living room where the interview is to be performed. This symbolises humbleness in the interviewees' presence, as seating on a chair can be seen as overpowering and disrespectful. The interviewer in this study sat on a chair for most of the interviews but on the floor when appropriate.

On arrival at a Tongan house an exchange of salutations, either in Tongan or English was performed. It is always polite for the host to offer a cup of tea or a cold drink before the interview, an interaction which helps with the rapport between the interviewer and interviewee. Providing brief background about the interviewer is also useful. It is an advantage if the researcher/interviewer is a Tongan; for example, the interviewees can give their views and opinions in their own language.

Before the interview, a brief explanation about the purpose of the study and of why and how the interview is to be conducted is given to the interviewee(s). This helps the parent(s) to feel at ease in the company of the researcher/interviewer and creates a comfortable atmosphere for interviewee(s) to speak freely on interview questions.

In one family, the father said a prayer before starting the interview. This too, is a common practice in a Tongan household.

During interviews, it is also respectful to allow for intrusions, for example, unexpected visitors, and children wanting attention.

The interviewer found that when parents are briefed well about the project, they tend to speak more freely and share their opinions openly. At the end of the interview most of the parents usually instigate a more general conversation.

Two of the Tongan parents were interviewed in English only, while the rest chose to use both Tongan and English.

Culturally Appropriate Practices: Niue Sample

Depending on the individuals involved, in both formal or informal situations, an exchange of salutations is of first and foremost importance. This is expressed in Niue as: *"Ko e mena lahi ke faaolo mua e lima ke fakalofa atu"* (It is a big thing to offer your hand first in greetings).

In the situation of a formal meeting, the appropriate practice would be to open with a liogi (prayer) and close with a liogi.

On some occasions, a gift of fruits, biscuits, or sweets may be offered by the interviewer to the family, especially when there are children in the household. This is a form of compensation for the time involved.

When conducting one of the interviews with a parent, the interviewer was asked to come into the kitchen and have a seat as the parent was in the middle of making a hot drink for her children. As the researcher had brought some cookies for the children, these were shared with everyone.

Culturally Appropriate Practices: Tokelauan Sample

When interviewing parents, cultural values and fakaaloalo (respect) were observed, for example, greeting words like "Talofa!", "Malo ni!", were exchanged followed by

handshaking, hugs and hogi (kiss). This depends on the individual and how well the interviewer knows the interviewee.

The researcher is then asked to sit wherever she/he feels comfortable for example, in the dining room, on the mat, or on chairs in the sitting room. The conversation takes place either in Tokelauan or English depending on the preference of the interviewee. Normally, casual conversations (similar to the Samoan culture of setting the scene) takes place before the interview.

Sometimes the researcher takes some form of small gift, for example, chocolates, fruits, or even small amount of money for the family as compensation for their time. Food is given to the parents or children; a monetary gift is usually for an older grandparent or a sick family; member in the home. However, in this study no payments or monetary gifts were made to participants.

During interviews, it is respectful to allow for intrusions, for example, phone calls, unexpected visitors, and uncontrolled environmental noise and so on. After the interviews, farewell speeches are exchanged and usually the parents offer a cup of tea and some food for the researcher to take home. This is a sign of respecting the researcher for her/his time and it is also respectful to accept it. "Tofa ni!" or "Tofa koutou" (farewell/goodbye) are said as the researcher leaves the interviewees' home.

Interview Procedures with Children

For all groups, interviews with parents and children took place at a time and venue suited to the parents. The children were invariably interviewed in their home or their grandparents' home. The importance of establishing a rapport with child interviewees was acknowledged (*see* e.g., Aldridge & Wood, 1998). As in the pilot study, the interviewers reported spending some time developing a rapport with each participating child.

The 5 Pacific Islands interviewers reported individually about their experiences of interviewing the 5-year-olds. Their comments are:

Cook Islands
The children knew the interviewer—and were relaxed. They asked her questions. Only one child was reserved and whispered her answers to her father who relayed them to the researcher. Another child wanted his brother included too. The interviewer said "no problem".

Niue
One child was talkative, as he knew the interviewer. One was shy and needed the parent's prompting. As all the children knew the interviewer, they had no problems with answering the questions.

Samoan
Four of the children answered the questions very well, while 2 needed some encouragement to respond. Two of the 6 children showed extra confidence throughout the interviews, for example, they did not look at their parents for support. Generally, 5-year-olds are a good age for participating in face-to-face interviews.

Tokelauan

The children knew the interviewer, and knew to respect her. They started off by showing her their rooms and toys. Several were interested in why the interviewer was asking questions.

Tongan

All the children in the study did not know the interviewer. One child was apprehensive initially, but warmed to the researcher once he knew the purpose of the interview. Another child would look to his mother for support when answering a question from the interviewer. The other 4 children were shy in the beginning but quickly warmed to the interviewer and were happy to answer the questions.

Twenty-six of the 27 parents were also interviewed at home, and 1 was interviewed at her workplace. Interviews were carried out in the language requested, and, wherever necessary, the responses were translated into English. To facilitate the analyses, all interviews were recorded in English on the interview schedules. Copies of the English-language interview schedules for parents, children, early childhood teachers, and school teachers are provided in appendix B.

Some of the questions about the child's favourite activities, and one about strategies for coping with reading something difficult, are modelled on the Competent Children study, for comparative purposes where appropriate (*see* Wylie, Thompson, & Kerslake Hendricks, 1996; Wylie & Thompson, 1997).

Interviews with early childhood teachers were carried out at the early childhood centres, or, if preferred, in the teacher's home. These interviews were either with individual teachers, or with a small group of staff, as requested by the teachers themselves.

The primary school teachers were interviewed individually at a quiet venue in the school, for example, the library or an unoccupied classroom or resource room. The duration of the interviews with school teachers ranged from 1–2 hours; the majority took 2 hours. Payment for relieving teachers was offered to the participating schools and to the early childhood centres.

In May and June 1999, the research team gathered a considerable range of material on transition from early childhood to the early years of schooling. Interviews with parents and children continued into September 1999 to secure the final sample size of 27 children/families. Interviews with early childhood teachers were completed by September 1999, and with school teachers by early October.

Data Preparation and Analyses

Interviews

During a half-day meeting with all interviewers present, coding categories were developed for the open-ended questions on the parents' and children's interviews. This procedure ensured representation across the 5 ethnic groups when re-reading and categorising all respondents' comments. At subsequent meetings, the 3 interviewers who carried out interviews with the school teachers developed the coding categories for the teacher interviewers.

The same 3 interviewers coded all of the interviews. Inter-coder reliability checks were

carried out on 20 percent of the interviews with parents and children. Inter-coder reliability percentages, calculated on the basis of agreements, disagreements, and omissions on the open-ended coding categories, ranged from 76.47 percent to 97.22 percent with a mean of 86.47 percent. A second coder checked the coding of the complete data sets for teachers. These procedures were used to check for consistency in coding.

Descriptive data were analysed by computer using the statistical package, SAS. Although the sample size of children was small, this procedure facilitated matching the data across children, parents, early childhood teachers, and school teachers. It was also intended that the results presented would include extensive qualitative material and quotes representing the voices of the participants.

School Charters

The text of each of the school charters was examined for specific references to Pacific Islands children, culture, or language. The researchers scrutinised each charter, searching for relevant keywords, including "equity" and "Pacific Islands". A comprehensive set of all Pacific content was compiled. Records were also kept of the number of charters without any specific Pacific content. In addition, content on transition to school was also of interest, but this was not found in any of the charters.

Summary

This chapter has outlined the methodology for the small-scale interview study of parents, children, school teachers, and early childhood teachers. The next chapter describes the main findings of the interviews about children's transition from Pacific Islands early childhood centres to primary school.

CHAPTER 4
RESULTS

Overview

The results reported focus primarily on participants' accounts, and include the voices of children, parents, and teachers. The findings from the interviews with children, parents, early childhood teachers, and school teachers are organised with reference to the 5 research questions. The interviews yielded considerable information about young Pacific Islands children's experiences of different contexts. Contexts included their homes, their early childhood centres or programmes, and schools.

The people interviewed all responded spontaneously to the open-ended questions. No pre-determined options were offered, and development of the coding categories took place after all interviews were completed. This means that the numbers and percentages reported in subsequent sections of this report were not influenced by the interviewers' suggestions or by pre-coded choices available.

The qualitative data recorded in this chapter include examples from all of the participants, and the comments reported represent participants from across the 5 ethnic groups. Suggestions for further research emerge from the data and from the research process.

Homes, Schools, and Early Childhood Centres: Similarities and Differences

What are the similarities and differences between the contexts of home, schools, and early childhood centres?

The children responded to a set of simply worded questions about their experiences of home, school, and early childhood settings. Their parents, school teachers, and early childhood teachers all described the similarities and differences among the contexts of home, Pacific Islands early childhood centres, and schools (*see* interview schedules, appendix B).

Children's Experiences

We asked children what their favourite activities are at home, the early childhood centre, and at school, and what books they like to read at home and at school. We also asked what things they don't like doing at school, and whom they go to for help in reading.

The most popular activities at home were watching television and drawing followed by reading. Fourteen children (52 percent) mentioned watching television and drawing. Another 13 children (48 percent) said that reading was their favourite activity at home.

The most popular activities at school were playing outdoors. Nineteen children (70 percent) mentioned playing outdoors. Another 16 children (59 percent) mentioned drawing and reading as their favourite activity at school.

The most popular activities at the early childhood centre are culturally related activities. Fifteen children (56 percent) mentioned culturally related activities such as singing or

dancing. Another 12 children (44 percent) said that playing outdoors or drawing was their favourite activity at the early childhood centre.

The above findings show that children enjoyed different activities at the early childhood centre from those they enjoyed at school. These results show a gap between early childhood education and school.

The most common aspect of school the children disliked was bullying. Eleven (41 percent) said they disliked conflict with their peers. Their comments included:

> Don't like others pushing me off the monkey bars. Don't like people playing rough games.
>
> Don't like mean children.
>
> When one of the girls took my lunch.

Six children had no dislikes, and 5 children mentioned they disliked engaging in mathematics and/or science-related activities, including doing puzzles and learning about shapes.

When asked "If you are trying to read something, but it's hard, what do you do?", 14 children (52 percent) mentioned going to the teacher when needing help in reading, followed by 9 children who mentioned going to a parent or other family member; another 6 children said they would go to another peer for help. Only 2 children said they would persist by sounding out the word, and 3 commented that they would look at the pictures.

Similarities

Drawing and/or colouring was a favourite activity among children common to all 3 settings.

Fourteen children (52 percent) listed drawing as a favourite activity at home. Sixteen children (59 percent) listed it for school. Twelve children (44 percent) listed drawing as a favourite activity at the early childhood centre.

It should be noted here that there may be a difference between licensed early childhood centres and unlicensed Pacific Islands language groups (PILGs) in terms of the time available for drawing and reading activities. At unlicensed PILGs, children have limited time, most of which is spent in cultural activities, whereas the licensed centres may have the children 6 to 8 hours for 5 days per week.

In addition, children liked to read the same type of books at home and at school. The most popular books were animal books which were mentioned by 14 children (41 percent), and 13 children (48 percent), respectively, followed by easy readers mentioned by 8 children, and 12 children (44 percent), respectively.

Differences

More children, 19 (70 percent), reported playing outdoors as a preferred activity at school, whereas 12 (44 percent) like outdoor play at the early childhood centre, and 6 said they liked outdoor play at home.

Fourteen children (52 percent) reported watching television at home, while this activity was not reported for school or for the early childhood centre.

Fifteen children (56 percent) reported liking culturally related activities, for example, music, singing, and dancing at the early childhood centre. In comparison only 1 child reported singing and dancing as a preferred activity in school.

Parents' Perceptions

Similarities

When asked "In what ways are home, early childhood centres, and school the same?", many parents considered that all contexts provide education and learning. Twenty-two parents (81 percent) replied that both early childhood centres and homes provided education. This was the most frequent response among the parents. For example, parents commented: "The aims are the same—education for the child". In addition, 12 of the parents (44 percent) specified that home and school are the same in that they offer education.

Parents' comments about educational (learning and teaching) similarities across the 3 contexts of home, school, and early childhood centre include:

> They are the same in the way they are all trying to teach and extend our children's knowledge and abilities.

> [At the] centre especially [we] find the teaching is very good, and [we are] comfortable that the school and the centre are the same.

> They are the same; books read at home [are] also used at the centre and at school. Learning to write. Story telling is the same at home as at the centre. The centre and school are the same in activities like drawing and painting.

Outdoor play was another area where parents commented on similarities in all 3 contexts. Eleven parents (41 percent) mentioned that there was outdoor play in all 3 settings.

Five parents said that discipline was a similarity between home and the Pacific Islands early childhood centre.

Two areas that some parents identified as similar at the early childhood centre and at home (but not at school) were language and religion. Six parents noted that home and the early childhood centre are similar because they use the Pacific Islands language, and 6 parents commented that there is similar emphasis on religion in these 2 contexts.

Differences

The difference the parents most frequently identified and focused on was concerned with Pacific Islands language and culture. In total, 19 parents (70 percent) said that their language and culture featured prominently at home and at the early childhood centre, but not at school. Their comments include:

> Language at the punanga [Cook Islands early childhood centre] the focus [there is] on Cook Islands Maori and also the culture. The Cook Islands language and culture are not taught at school.

> Samoan language is now not often used, but we emphasise it to the kids. The Samoan language was the only language [child's name] used when she started school. Now [child's name] is speaking more English.

> At home it's easier for the child to express her feelings, using the same language. When at school it could be more difficult to express her feelings.

> The language of instruction. The rule at home is to speak Tongan—it is encouraged. A difference that [the child] has picked up from school is to the language spoken.

> Tokelau language. Language environments are different, [the child] feels more comfortable at home.

Several parents added that children's shyness accentuates the language and communication differences:

> [Niue] children are shy to speak in English at school. The children are not familiar with the other children at school. The children are too shy to speak to the teacher to explain things they don't understand. [Having a] different teacher at school makes it harder for the children to approach. It takes a while before the child is familiar with the teacher.

Learning skills like reading and writing was another area of difference, mentioned by 14 parents (52 percent). Parents said that reading and writing were taught at school, that instruction at school was more structured and focused on reading and writing, or that different contexts catered for different levels of literacy learning:

> They are different because they teach or educate at different levels of a child's life. At home a child gets taught to say a name, at preschool a child has to identify the letters in a name, and at primary school a child has to spell the name.

Parents also specified differences in discipline and routines. Eleven parents (41 percent) mentioned differences in discipline. On the whole, they found school more structured than early childhood centres and home. Their comments include:

> Behaviour. [Child's name] is more hyperactive at [the Pacific Islands early childhood centre] because Nana teaches there. At home he's more flexible. At school it's more disciplined.

However, their comments also suggest that school is less constrained in certain respects. Several referred to aspects of language use, with an emphasis on swearing:

> Home and school are different because of the language used [no swear words at home]. There is no control of the language used in school. [This is] different from the centre too. No bad language is used at home and centre.

There were some detailed comments about religion, and 7 parents said that religion was emphasised at home and at the early childhood centre, but not at school.

> Early childhood centre is more biblical compared to school [which] is more curriculum orientated.

> Tokelau culture consider religion very important, says prayers in the morning and at lunch which is the practice at home and at the centre, but not at school.

Five parents mentioned that there were fewer educational resources at home:

> At the early childhood centre and at school there are a variety of equipment and teaching aids, but at home that is not always the case.

Health and safety and hygiene was another area of difference, according to 4 of the parents. Three parents commented on differences in adult-child ratios, or in class sizes.

> Size of class. There are more kids at school than at the [Pacific Islands] centre. It took a while for her to settle [at school].

> Home teaching is one on one. At school teaching is one on one but only for a few minutes every day, as school has more children per teacher, so time is split between all children.

The main similarity that parents spontaneously identified, then, was that all contexts offer education, and the main difference was the absence of Pacific Islands languages at school.

Early Childhood Teachers' Views

Similarities

Eight of the 11 early childhood teachers in the Pacific Islands early childhood centres in this study report reading as an important activity in all 3 settings. Six of the 11 early childhood teachers reported the 3 settings also teach Pacific Islands culture, including music, dancing, and language, or have some form of Pacific Island club for these activities. Another 4 of the teachers said that learning mathematical concepts (including distinguishing shapes, sizes, and colours) occur in all 3 contexts.

Differences

Differences between the 3 contexts included the physical or social environment, and a greater emphasis on discipline at school. Activities are more structured at school, and there is less use of the home language. The curriculum and subjects of study are also different at school, as is the relative absence of family members in school compared with the early childhood setting.

Some of these factors may be interrelated. As one early childhood teacher noted:

> In the centre, you have parents and grandparents helping . . . I don't feel comfortable disciplining the children when parents are present.

School Teachers' Views

Similarities

The 22 school teachers were asked about the similarities and differences between home, early childhood settings, and school, and 14 of them (64 percent) commented that caring and secure environment were the main similarities. As 2 teachers stated:

> The 3 contexts of home, early childhood and school are similar in having caring and supportive environment.

> All adults are actually interested and concerned about the child; emotionally, intellectually and safety and care in the home, early childhood and school. When the needs arise we contact each other.

The routines, discipline, and rules were other similarities mentioned by 11 (50 percent) teachers, while 7 brought up "learning" as another. One teacher made these comments about having the child in the study to settle well with routines before starting school.

> The routines are well set before they start school. The [child in this study] was well settled into routines by the time she started school.

Four teachers knew that children with mixed ethnic parents speak English only throughout the transition across the 3 contexts. Two teachers noticed religion and spiritual aspects as other similarities experienced between home and early childhood centre.

Differences

Of the 22 teachers interviewed, 19 (86 percent) stated that routines/discipline/rules and structure are different among the 3 settings. Two teachers responded:

> The major one for me is that the structure of preschool is different and when children come to school the structure is tighter. We see the child in different ways, e.g., their interactions with older and younger children. The expectations in primary schools begin to change in behaviour, learning, sports and the way they interact with children.

> As you get into school there's more requirement of conformity. The children aren't so free to choose the time and place of each activity. School is more formal and is more structured.

Thirteen (59 percent) teachers observed that Pacific Islands language and culture are generally spoken at home and early childhood centres, but not in schools. Below is the comment of one of the teachers about the language difference of Samoan children when they arrive at school:

> In general I notice the language difference in Samoan children, e.g., some children don't talk—maybe they feel overwhelmed by the use of English. We quite often use children as interpreters. Some children might take a good 2 years before contributing to class discussions.

Lower adult-child ratios at school were observed by 5 teachers as one of the differences among the 3 contexts. In schools not many parents attend during class sessions, while in early childhood centres grandparents and parents often stay till the end of the day to accompany their children home. Four teachers responded that the school curriculum, for example, reading, writing, etc., are also different between school and early childhood centres, while 3 of them said that there are more resources at school than early childhood centres. Two of the teachers stated that the religious and spiritual activities are also different between home, early childhood centres, and school and 1 teacher did not know about Pacific Islands early childhood centres.

Six teachers did not know about or have any affiliation with Pacific Islands early childhood centres; here are some comments from 2 teachers:

> I haven't been into Pacific Islands early childhood settings. I don't know. I have no contact with them, and with the Cook Islands early childhood centre.

> We haven't got round to visiting ā'oga 'āmata yet to find out for sure.

The curriculum is a further major area of difference between early childhood centres and school. This is evident in these specific comments made by one of the teachers:

> Te Whāriki, the early childhood curriculum, looks at the child holistically, whereas school is broken up into curriculum areas.

Summary

The children enjoyed a range of learning activities at home, at the early childhood centre, and at school. Parents commented that all 3 contexts offer education, and the main difference for them was the absence of Pacific Islands language and culture at school. Teachers' views showed some similarity with parents. Discipline, rules, and structure were seen as differences at school.

Expectations and Views of School, Early Childhood Centre, and Home

What are the aspirations, expectations, and views of parents, teachers, and children of these contexts?

The children were encouraged to talk about their views of school by discussing their likes and dislikes in that context. Parents, early childhood teachers, and school teachers discussed types of learning and expectations of children's capabilities and preparation for school.

Children's Views

We asked children what they liked and disliked about starting at school, who was involved in choosing the school they are currently attending, and whether they have any friends from their early childhood centre at the school.

The most frequently reported aspect of their current school the children liked was making new friends or being with friends. Fourteen children (52 percent) talked about their friends. Comments included:

> I was happy to see my friends from the punanga.
>
> Happy to play with friend and because heaps of kids.
>
> Sitting down with other children and eating our lunch.

The next most popular response made by 7 children was that they liked the playing environment at the school. As one child commented:

> Playground is better, has monkey bars, slides, rock climbing, and skipping rope.

Nine of the children had no dislikes. Their responses included:

> I like everything to do with my school.
>
> I wanted to go to school.

Of the 12 children (44 percent) with dislikes about school, being lonely or missing their friends, and peer aggression are the most frequently mentioned factors. Their responses included:

> Some of the teachers are mean.
>
> Not speaking in Samoan and I miss my friends.

Sixteen of the children (60 percent) contributed to the decision to attend their current school. Thirteen of the children (48 percent) said they have friends from the early childhood centre attending their current school.

Parents' Views

Learning Expected at Home

When asked what they expected their child to learn at home, the parents tended to talk about literacy, and /or about respect and social skills. Across all groups, these were main types of learning expected.

In total, 19 parents (70 percent) commented on literacy learning. Examples of their responses are:

> Skills needed to help him in coping with what school will demand of him—communication, listening, some literacy skills . . .

> Further develop his reading and writing skills.

Eighteen parents specified respect, and 18 (67 percent) commented on social skills. Parents usually discussed these attributes in combination.

> Learn good manners. Learn to respect one another. . . . Share everything she has. Ask questions when she's not sure or [does not] understand. Love her brothers and sisters. Not talk to strangers. Respect everyone older than her.

> I think what I expect of her is the values. For example, being polite, respecting people, respect older siblings. I expect her to take part in the running of the household chores. To be honest. Talk through things.

> Being kind and treating everyone the same. [At home we] teach our children about morals, which enables them to adapt better to school, and get on better with others.

> Love one another. Respect their elders. Learn to help each other.

Pacific Islands language and culture was also a prominent area of learning at home, specified by 15 parents (56 percent).

> I would expect and would like her to learn the languages, Tongan and Cook Island. She may not necessarily learn the language at school. Her culture—morals and values.

Eleven parents (41 percent) described areas of mathematical learning taught at home:

> Mathematical activities, for example simple maths.

> Learn how to count.

A further aspect of learning that parents expected would occur at home were hygiene (specified by 6 parents).

> We want her to learn a routine in the morning. Hygiene, prayers in the morning before going to school.

Six parents talked about religion or religious values they expected their child to learn at home.

> Learn stories from the Bible. Spiritual teaching, prayers.

Over all then, parents expected a variety of areas of learning to be addressed at home, including literacy, respect, social skills, Pacific Islands language and culture, mathematical skills, hygiene, and religion.

Learning Expected at the Early Childhood Centre

Most parents expected their children to learn Pacific Islands language and culture at the early childhood centre. Twenty-two parents (81 percent) spontaneously mentioned language and culture as an area of learning at the centre.

> Firstly they foster the language further. They foster values we practise at home.

In addition, 19 (70 percent) of the parents expected children to learn social skills. Interaction with other children was important to them:

> Being the only one in our family we felt it important that she interact with other children from the centre so that she could learn how to share and play with other kids. Comfortable and confident with Tongan teachers at the centre because the teaching and language is the same.

Fifteen (56 percent) commented on preparation for school, and 10 (37 percent) mentioned respect.

> To prepare child for primary school and learn Tokelau language and culture.

Learning Expected at School

Twenty-three parents (85 percent) expected school to offer intellectual challenges for their children, and 15 (56 percent) commented on learning across all subjects. One detailed comment was:

> Same as at the centre, with the school more responsible with what they teach. It is assumed every child learns at the same pace. For me I expect the school to accept the child as an individual rather than as a group. [I expect] schools to take responsibility so that learning is taking place. To be able to pick up on weaknesses and strengths. Communication with parents re child's progress and settling down process. Feedback is rather general. [We] need more specifics, so if there are concerns they can be addressed immediately.

Further, 7 parents wanted their child to learn respect at school, and another 7 mentioned Pacific languages and culture.

Early Childhood Teachers' Views

Expectations on Starting School

The early childhood teachers expected children going from the Pacific Islands early childhood centres to have mastered a wide range of learning and social skills by the time they enter school.

They most commonly expected literacy skills, and that children would write their own name (mentioned by 9 teachers), followed by sharing and peer interpersonal skills (mentioned by 7 teachers), mathematical skills (mentioned by 6 teachers), and knowledge of their Pacific culture, most importantly, language (mentioned by 5 teachers).

Slightly less than half of the teachers expect children to demonstrate respect and good

manners to elders, as well as personal self-confidence.

Most of the teachers (7 of the 11) expressed concern about the child's transition to school, citing the non-continuance of language/cultural programmes, and the child's learning preparation for school. As one teacher commented:

> No teachers in primary school to carry on teaching them about language and culture.

Continued contact with the child, either through the childhood centre, personal visits, other members of the Pacific community, or cultural programmes helped the teachers cope with their concerns. Early childhood teachers expected parents to encourage and support their children to help them through the transition to school.

School Teachers' Views

Learning Expected at School

When the school teachers were asked of their expectations of children from Pacific Islands language centres when they start school, the teachers generally mentioned social skills, language and culture, respect and manners and basic knowledge of English. In total, 15 (68 percent) teachers commented on social skills. Their responses included:

> I expect everybody from Pacific Islands language centres to have social skills such as, how to interact with other people. However, these two students are very confident anyway. I don't expect anybody to be at certain standard because people are people and not what we want them to be. Everybody reaches stages at different times.

> I think really just for children to enjoy being at school, to be able to share—social skills.

> I have the same expectations as for all other children—they are not singled out as being different. We sometimes talk about where children come from. [Child's name] comes from Rarotonga so we talk about Rarotonga—we recognise some differences like that, but I have the same expectations of all children.

> Friendly and be able to speak to adults so that they can state their needs, e.g., be able to ask to leave the room for the toilet, to be independent enough to know where to find their own lunch boxes, school bag and clothing, tie shoe laces, and be able to put jackets on and away. Be able to relate well and socialise with other children in the class.

> They would be adjusted socially to all children and be independent in toilet training and knowing their belongings.

> Very much like other children, they need to give their attention to adults. I expect them to be keen to try things and explore the school, seek the teacher or adult if they want help, e.g., urgent or semi-urgent, if they're in danger and if they want to know something, they feel comfortable to ask us.

Twelve teachers (55 percent) commented about the language and culture as some of their expectations and their responses included:

Personally for them to be themselves. It's what I expect from all children to be themselves and to work to their full potential and to get as much as they can from school. Hope that they would share their cultures with us.

I would expect them to bring their Pacific Islands language and culture to school, and that we can foster that at school and that we would fit in with her routine from the centre and respect the culture—language, bringing special food to school. I like not to place too many expectations on children when they come into school. I like to look at them where they are and move on from there. When they come to school they don't think their language is important.

Some communication with the family is essential and I would expect them to be exposed to experiences, e.g., ways of celebrations in their own culture, and be competent in their own language.

Children from Pacific Islands centres come with their strength in their own language and culture and we encourage it in schools.

Some progress report of their learning abilities from their early childhood teachers and children to speak their own language to communicate in class and in the playground.

Six of the teachers responded about respect and manners and literacy experiences as follows:

First and foremost, to have confidence especially to interact with peers and teachers—to slot into routines quite quickly—to have appropriate mat behaviour and to show respect, e.g., Please can I go to the toilet? Saying thank you etc.

That they would be introduced to books and listening to stories. Be able to know mathematical concepts, recognition of numbers and names.

In some ways, not very different from children from another background. I expect someone to read to and with them.

Recognise a few letters of the alphabet, labelling, colours, numbers, painting and drawing. Have a good introduction to books.

Socialisation skills, basic things like hold scissors, use a paint brush. Reading, playing with blocks, being able to write own names. Knows colours. Positional languages (e.g., up, down . . .). Recognise letter names (e.g., 4 or 5 letters to build up on). Being able to count (rote) 1–10 not necessarily in English. Independence (e.g., being on her own at school).

To know the use of manners and social graces, e.g., respect and good food manners.

Six teachers expect children from Pacific Islands language centres to come to school with a basic knowledge of English, and their comments are:

I don't have any language experience in Pacific Islands language services but I expect them to come with some knowledge of English.

Just enough English to know how to ask for help.

Being able to communicate with the teachers and peers.

Would it make a difference it they had English as well at a lower level (ECE)? More English would help.

Come with an understanding and ability to speak English.

Five teachers expect these children from Pacific Islands language centres to come with motivation and they commented as follows:

I think really just for children to enjoy being at school.

Being independent, e.g., being on their own at school.

To have a certain independence in recognising and taking care of their own belongings.

To be prepared to take risks and to attempt new aspirations.

Seven teachers commented on other expectations as are outlined below:

I don't have any expectations as I don't really know what's going on in these centres.

I don't have any expectations as a lot of children don't attend preschool at all. Any expectation that I would have is for them to visit school before starting to familiarise [themselves].

Be independent in toilet training

Co-operative learning. Being able to work on their own and in a group situation.

Only one teacher expected children to come with a progress report from their early childhood centre and she said:

Some progress report of their learning abilities and needs from their early childhood centre would be helpful.

When asked about the skills they expect from the Pacific Islands children, 14 teachers (64 percent) said that social, mathematical, and communication skills were most commonly expected. Some of their comments were:

To have early strategies of learning and socialising, e.g., toileting and communication. Sharing and relating well to others. Be able to write their own name, rote count from 1–10 and know the basic colours, shapes, sizes, early sequencing and be able to identify digits.

Social skills, being able to get on with other children. If there is a problem being able to sort it out themselves. Being able to say 'I don't like it when you hit me like that'.

I would expect them to be familiar with basic counting skills, colours, bi-lingualism and social skills, e.g., sharing. This is what I expect from any preschool.

Thirteen (59 percent) teachers expect literacy skills, for example, love of books and knowing the alphabet, and some teachers commented that Pacific Islands children have reading and book experience from a Bible or experiences about extended family meetings.

Some examples of these comments are as follows:

> I'd like to think they recognise some of their alphabet, and that they have a love of books and know which way to hold a book. We need to be aware that the Pacific Islands children will have reading and book experiences from a Bible or something like that. They probably have lots of literacy experiences. We ask about experiences like going to MacDonalds, but they've probably had experiences like extended family meetings.

> To be able to identify letters of their ethnic alphabet and the European alphabet, recognise the name and maybe write them.

> Knowledge of books, i.e., handling a book, knowing which way to turn pages and that a book has a message, and some writing experience, e.g., knowing how to hold a crayon, pencil, brush and an experience of alphabet, e.g., letter symbols.

Discipline and routine were other skills expected by 12 (55 percent) of the teachers; for example, they expected them to be independent in dressing up, i.e., knowing how to tie shoe laces, and putting on and taking off a jacket or becoming responsible for their belongings, and being able to sit for a short period of time and listen. Some of these comments are as follows:

> Independent, e.g., in dressing and toileting, learning to tidy up after an activity, becoming responsible for their belongings, e.g., putting their lunch box away, unpacking school bag, being able to sit for short period of time and listen, and be able to respond when spoken to.

> We expect them to sit and listen to a story and follow instructions and routines.

Nine teachers mentioned fine motor skills and 8 expected respect and manners as some of the skills the Pacific Islands children ought to have. Nine teachers have other expectations as stated below:

> I think it is unfair of me to expect anything from a child coming to school because I would hope that they would have the co-operative and social skills to share and work with other children. Whatever skills that a child brings into the school is great.

> To be able to label basic items, e.g., pegs. They can often give you the function but cannot label.

> Being able to use their Pacific language as a strength.

> You don't expect a great amount, but if they come with skills it's great. Great help for them. Puts them on a step ahead so they can move on more quickly to other stuff.

The school teachers were asked about whether they had concerns about their expectations and children's skills when they started school. Eighteen (82 percent) responded that they did have concerns about the children, and these are the limited English, shyness, limited listening skills. Two teachers have concerns about the children's limited literacy experiences and 2 teachers have concerns about their own ability to help Pacific Islands children. Some of their comments are stated below:

They do have enough English base knowledge to be able to understand but what I'm saying, is the concern is not of the child but my own concern of my knowledge and performance. Basically it is up to me to see that their environment is safe.

Yes, I do because although children slot into school well, some children don't, e.g., a lot of P.I.s. early childhood centre children don't always pay visits to the schools prior to starting primary school. I also feel that sometimes they have limited experiences in things like reading, language and maths activities. Of the 2 children I have for the research, one slotted in more easily as she had a lot of book knowledge, while the other didn't. He was defiant, won't come to class, reluctant to obey the teacher or follow instructions. However, he's slowly making progress in this area.

Their English was a factor and because there was difficulty with English language she often didn't understand a lot of things going on in class, very shy and reluctant to question or find out things. English reading and writing skills were slow to develop.

One teacher has concerns about the non-provision of progress reports from these Pacific Islands language centres.

We have to assess what knowledge the children have and then follow the plan from there and so it would be valuable to receive progress reports from the prior learning centres.

There were 10 (56 percent) teachers who have other concerns and these are generally about modern technology taking over imaginative play, children with limited listening skills, or lacking comprehension, being moody and not listening. Some teachers have too high expectations of these children.

Basic listening skills—I've never come across children with such shocking listening skills (glue ear) but moody not knowing they're not listening. I'm their first English speaker—except priests in church or shopkeepers. It's a huge jump. Perhaps my expectations are too high. I've had to adjust my expectations of their English and dealing with outside experiences (e.g., found Te Papa visit overwhelming).

Comprehension sometimes lacking. Grammatical errors in speech and instructions sometimes not understood.

She was very distant—she did find the transition very difficult and she would just sit there and not take part in the activities. Mum stayed at first—it was a good 6–7 weeks before she came to me then + 2 weeks with the teacher.

I know they want to preserve their language and culture—that is fine.

I do have another concern. A lot of the children are not allowed to speak English at home usually when the grandparents are living in the home.

The children (usually the Samoan ones) get smacked for speaking English at home. I went to visit a family where the father wanted to practise English at home. But usually, the children's homework—English reading books—need

English. I say to the parents 'do keep on with your own language at home but do let the child practise reading at home'.

When asked how they were able to cope with these concerns, the teachers suggested several different strategies. Six teachers said they had peer support and a buddy system, while another 6 said they do the best they can to help. Five of them mentioned the parents' involvement, and acknowledgment of the Pacific Islands children's language and culture. One teacher suggested ratios—small numbers of children in class, while another teacher said to offer children challenges.

The following quote refers to a child who has developmental needs.

> I encourage the parents to listen to the child's reading at home and to let them practise. He's getting transitional funding for special needs, e.g., I.E.P. Individual Educational Programme for children of 5–7 years.

Other comments from the teachers include:

> I do the best I can depending on the circumstances. Make parents comfortable.
>
> Sometimes it's hard to establish to know whether they understand the knowledge or the learning/language.
>
> Give them challenging reading materials to read and involve them more with advanced activities. Use them as role model in class or as a class leader.
>
> Praise and positive reinforcement—encouraging him to participate in class more often. Peer with a buddy or small group of sensible, reliable and responsible children.
>
> Firstly talking to their parents and finding out what the children are used to and what they do to make the children listen. Talking to the Samoan teacher in school. Special Education 2000 teacher visited and helped with strategies to implement for listening skills. We tried only giving one instruction at a time.
>
> We try and have small numbers in new entrant classes.
>
> He's part of a group of 3 children with a quarter of an hour every day for language experience and extension, e.g., H.E.L.P. programme with the teacher aide.
>
> Haven't done anything pro-active about them. Would be helpful to know what the child knows, so as not to be patronising.

The teachers discussed in some detail what they expected parents to do to help the child's transition to school. School teachers generally expect parents to help in reading and talking to the child 12 (55 percent), taking the children to school visits 11 (50 percent), and also role modelling—reading books and experiences in the wider environment. There were 14 (64 percent) teachers who made other comments such as:

> Be good role models to their children in terms of behaviour and their beliefs and values.
>
> I would like to make the parents feel welcome.

> More involvement in the school in the class she's in. Just coming in on a regular basis to see how she is getting along. It's encouraging to see parents talking to teachers. Assist with spelling where ever possible.
>
> Don't expect anything formal but enough to assist with child's familiarity.
>
> Parents to name all clothing and tell the child what to do after school, e.g., whether to wait in classroom or whatever the arrangement is for safety purposes.
>
> Partnership between home and school is imperative.

We asked them to describe how supportive they found parents' participation in the classroom and the school. Sixteen (73 percent) teachers said the parents are very supportive and 7 mentioned other criteria, for example, shyness because of language barrier, while 4 teachers stated the non-availability of working parents. Some of their comments are as follows:

> In general parents stay away and are very shy and a lot of them don't speak English fluently. Parents are there on class trips and when we have concerts they're helpful.
>
> For these 2 children's parents—they're very supportive. I know that both these parents have helped and are interested in finding out what their children are like in school.
>
> Dad is very supportive. He reads to his son every night through the home reading programme and writes notes/comments in the note book.

Summary

In summary, the aspect of school the children most often liked was having friends there. Being lonely or bullying were their main concerns about school. Parents expected that at home their children would learn literacy, respect, social skills, Pacific Islands language and culture, mathematical skills; that at the early childhood centre their children would learn language and culture and social skills; and that at school they would be guided to enhance their intellectual skills across the curriculum areas.

The early childhood and school teachers had somewhat similar expectations. They also emphasised the need to learn literacy and English language skills at school.

Transition from Home and Early Childhood Centres to School

How well do children make the transition between the contexts (as defined by the children themselves)?

Children's Experiences

We asked children whether they liked having a family member staying at school with them, whether they talked about the school at the early childhood centre (before starting school), and whether their parents talked about the school they were to attend.

Twenty of the children (74 percent) said they liked having a family member or other adult stay at the school with them, whereas only 6 children said they didn't, and 1 child

was unsure.

Most children also reported that, before they started attending school, they had talked about going to school. They had discussed this both at the early childhood centre and with their parents at home.

Parents' Perceptions

When we asked the parents how well their children settled into school, the majority responded positively, with 19 (70 percent) making comments like "very well".

> Loved school. She went to school once a week for the last 3 months of [her final year at the early childhood centre].

Several parents noted that having siblings or friends at the school helped.

> Prior to her going to school, the centre set every Friday of each month as a visit to school. I could sense that she was ready for school. Meeting with key people helped with the smooth transition. [Her] bigger brother was there to keep an eye over his younger sister.

However, 3 parents replied that their child did not settle well, citing the child's limited confidence in English as a difficulty. Another 4 parents commented that they were concerned because their child was shy or lonely at school. Three parents discussed bullying as a problem, which is consistent with the children's own expressed dislike of peer aggression and bullying in the primary school setting.

All 27 parents said that they chose the school their child was currently attending. Twenty parents (74 percent) explained further that the reason for their choice was locality (or proximity to home), 12 (44 percent) said the child had siblings or friends at the school, and 11 (41 percent) commented that the reputation of the school or its teaching methods was a reason why they chose the school.

Early Childhood Teachers' Views

Almost all (10, i.e., 91 percent) of the teachers had some contact with the parents when children first started school. Half of the teachers reported that it is better if the parents stay with the child, if only for the first day. A few said the child settled in school better if the parent did not stay with the child, while only a couple of teachers said it depends on the child. As one teacher noted:

> Children are not the same. I think kids from preschool and kindergarten etc. are very independent. They like doing things without their parents, but there are other kids who are not safe with other people except [their] parents.

The early childhood teachers discussed the Pacific Islands resources available in the centres. This was likely to be an area of contrast for children moving to school from a Pacific Islands early childhood centre.

The most often-named Pacific Island resources mentioned by early childhood teachers included books, visual materials (posters, charts, pictures), handcrafts (mats, clothing), and audio materials (music, songs, audiocassette tapes).

School Teachers' Views

The school teachers were asked, "In your experience, do you think a child normally settles in better if the parent/s or extended family member/s stays, or if the child is left with the teacher?" Ten (45 percent) teachers preferred not to have the parents stay as the children tended to cling to them and not get involved in class activities, while 7 of them wanted to have the parents to stay with the child at the initial stage. Some of their reasons are as follows:

> When parents stay, the child cries when they leave, so it's better if the child is left with the teacher.
>
> Generally the child can become familiar with the classroom environment and exploring the new school independently rather than having family around as he tends to be clinging or withdrawing from class activities.
>
> The ones who have not had any school experiences their parents stay for up to 6 months. Children from ā'oga 'āmata are often seen to settle whether parents are there or not. When parents are there they're not inhibited in their learning.
>
> Because a lot of clinging type behaviour often holds the child back. Once Mum's gone then he's more involved with his friends in class activities. A child is often comfortable if he's by himself. It forces him to making friends.
>
> Parents can stay at the initial stage.

The teachers also discussed the appropriate length of time for parents to stay. Four of the teachers commented on various lengths of time for parents to stay: some could remember that parents often sat at the back of the class, while 3 wanted parents to stay for a period of 1–2 hours. Others said that it depended on the child.

> It's good for parents to stay for 10 minutes and then leave. This way the child will become more dependent on the teacher for support and will explore the new environment more quickly.
>
> It depends on the child. If the child is dependent on the parent, it is better if the parent leaves.
>
> Can't remember, quite often parents stay or sit at the back of the class.
>
> I guess it was a shock for children from Pacific centres. Island parents are a little bit shyer. Here they come to school visits 3–5 weeks prior to starting. The parents stay all the time then.
>
> Rather than staying for the half day, I would prefer if they come and go in 1–2 hour slots because sometimes the child looks for the parents for reassurance.
>
> Every student is different. It's important that they do stay for a while, and do some visits. It is dependent on the child's needs—1–2 hours minimum. Some children need longer, but some can be difficult for their parents.

One teacher experienced the differences between the Samoan and European children in her class in that way and she commented as follows:

> If they have been for visits usually it's fine. If the child is getting upset, I tell the parent to go. I tell the child I am the teacher. If Mum's there, they don't know who is boss. Once the child is established, the mothers might stay. I haven't had upset Samoan children. It's the European children are the most challenging in that way.

The school teachers were asked about their school's policy concerning parent or extended family staying or not staying in the classroom. Twenty-one (95 percent) teachers said they have an open-door policy and that parents are most welcome to come to school any time. Two teachers do not know their school policy, 1 has no specific policy, while 3 teachers made other comments on this question.

> More than welcome to stay. If bringing preschoolers they are responsible for them, and if out of hand then they may ask to leave or take the preschooler away.

> I don't know the school policy but I encourage parents to come to my classroom and join their children's activities and help them out with reading and telling them stories, making things and listening to them.

> Parents don't think they can be of any help.

Another issue discussed was their attitude towards erratic attendance during the first few weeks if the child was having difficulties in settling in. Fourteen (64 percent) teachers said they talked to the parents, and 6 stated that they did not experience erratic attendance. Five teachers had other attitudes, while 4 said that they documented patterns of absences. Two of them encouraged the child to come to school.

> We have not observed erratic attendance with ā'oga 'āmata children.

> It can be very unsettling. If consistent attendance you're setting a positive [pattern for] life long learning.

> I send a note to the office and the receptionist contacts home.

> No problem here. Excellent attendance.

> We take a list of days absent and generally the parents are contacted by phone.

Finally, the school teachers were asked what Pacific Island resources they had at the school. Thirteen (59 percent) teachers said they had books in Pacific Islands languages. Eleven (50 percent) teachers remarked about having had charts and posters as well as artwork, 8 of the teachers said they had other resources, and the other 8 teachers said they had not many. Three teachers stated that they had videos of celebrations and 2 said they had tapes and music.

> Books, tapes, children's reading books, posters but not many.

> Very little [looks around walls of classroom, which show no P.I. materials/posters].

Summary

Most children (74 percent) liked to have a family member with them when settling into school. In contrast, nearly half of the school teachers preferred not to have parents stay. However, the majority of parents thought that their children had settled well into school. Examples were given of Pacific Islands resources available in schools.

Facilitating Transition Based on the Research Findings

How can the information collected in this study assist teachers and parents to facilitate transition across the three contexts?

Children's Experiences

Several types of information evident in the children's responses potentially might inform teachers and parents about how to facilitate transition. Dissemination of the children's views expressed to date will provide some insights.

The interviewers also asked the children what would they like done at the school to make them happy. Eleven (41 percent) wanted more time devoted to play, 9 children asked for more drawing or colouring activities. In addition, just a few children suggested that they needed computers, more new books, and good happy teachers.

Parents' Views

When asked what they would have liked to have made starting school more comfortable for the child, 10 parents (37 percent) reiterated that there had been no problems.

> Teachers couldn't have done more than they did, which was perfect.

> Nothing, because the school had a system where a parent or sibling or whanau member, or buddy, was able to stay with him.

Six parents suggested having more school visits prior to starting school, 6 said that the Pacific language and culture of the child needed to be encouraged at school, and 6 recommended having more Pacific Islands teachers in the school.

Parents suggested several types of information or communication strategies with parents that would help to make starting school easier for their children. More information about the curriculum was the most frequent request, made by 11 (41 percent) parents. Another 7 suggested giving parents more information about the importance of reading with their children at home. Eight suggested that teachers needed to have understanding and realistic expectations of children, and 6 parents commented that family visits to school would be useful. This detailed comment is typical of some parents' concerns in several areas:

> We think that the school should provide us with information on how the children are coping with the new environment. We feel the school still hasn't done enough to accommodate Pacific Islands children. For example, when our child brings a book home, you feel that she should learn how to read at school and recognise words. School should structure their teaching

around the children's needs. Teachers should impart their structure to parents so that parents can build on what the child has learnt at school.

Early Childhood Teachers' Views

Regarding the transition from early childhood centres to school, 7 of the 11 early childhood teachers report that information from this study could potentially improve communication between the early childhood centre and primary school teachers, and also help them provide better services, if they receive feedback of the study findings.

Early childhood teachers also said that information disseminated from the study might lead to improving communication between parents and primary school teachers.

School Teachers' Views

When the teachers were asked, "How can the information collected in the study assist teachers to facilitate transition from a Pacific Island centre to school?", 18 (82 percent) teachers generally commented that communication between early childhood centres and primary schools is very important. Thirteen (59 percent) teachers said the information will help early childhood teachers to prepare for transition and 7 of them mentioned other areas. Below are some of the examples of comments from the teachers:

> A push from Pacific Islands centres for school teachers to come and visit their preschools and the other way round.

> I need to know more about the culture. Possibly a visit for me to an early childhood centre.

> If Pacific Islands teachers in early childhood knew the expectations of the school teachers, they may be able to incorporate the skills etc., into their programmes. There should be a two-way thing.

Six teachers wanted feedback and a summary of results from the research.

> The results of the study could be published in the *Gazette* (Ministry of Education) and in *Researched News* (NZCER).

> A report or a handbook about the research will help teachers and book institutions become aware of the needs of the Pacific Islands children.

Seven teachers stated other information such as a report from Pacific Islands early childhood centres, for example:

> I'll find it very interesting to know where the child has come from before, e.g., intellectually and socially and this will assist us for appropriate class placement. I would appreciate a progress report from the preschool listing strengths and weaknesses. This will help the teacher formulate the best programme to suit the child's needs.

> Hopefully the information collected will make closer ties between language nests and school, e.g., sharing of the information about the children and being able to cater better for the children's needs.

They also offered comments on how the information in this study could assist teachers to facilitate transition from home to school. The communication between home and school is the main response from 21 (95 percent) teachers, followed by 11 (50 percent) teachers

who want feedback for parents and teachers, then 8 others require feedback in Pacific Islands languages for parents. Another 8 have other responses. Some examples of their comments are stated below:

> I would hope that the P.I. centres could explain on perspective and how keen we are to know as much about the child and to know what the parents hope their child would gain at school. Could the Pacific Islands centres help parents ask the right questions and encourage them to come as much as possible to school so that teacher can share their child's progress. Pacific Islands centre teachers could write an introductory letter and inform the school of the child's strength, activities that child enjoys, perhaps names of siblings.

> Make people aware of what's going on in concerns with Pacific Islands children. I want to know more about the expectations of Pacific Islands early childhood teachers and families towards teachers and school.

> A report of the study should be written in the parents' ethnic languages so they can understand and be able to follow what the school needs to make the transition as easy as possible. It is also important for the school to know what the parents want to be done in order to have a smooth transition of children to school and it might mean changes in the school policy.

> Parents ought to know that the school is open to them to come and sit, read, make things with the children and so on.

Summary

The children's comments provide insights into aspects of school they enjoy. Parents were generally positive about what teachers do to facilitate children's transition to school. More communication between home and school, and extensive dissemination of the findings of this study are recommended.

Maintenance and Support of Home Languages and Culture at School

5a How do schools continue to assist and support the home languages and cultures of Pacific Islands children starting primary school?

Children's Experiences

We asked children whether they spoke their Pacific Islands language in the 3 settings. All 27 children (100 percent) said they spoke their Pacific language at the early childhood centre, 21 children (78 percent) speak it at home, and only 5 children speak it at school.

Parents' Perceptions

The parents talked about the languages their children spoke in several settings. Almost all of the children (26 of the 27) spoke some English at home. In addition, 7 spoke Samoan, 6 Tokelauan, 5 Tongan, 3 Cook Island Maori, 1 Niue, and 1 Maori.

All parents of the 27 children said that their children spoke English at school. According to the parents, 5 children also spoke some Maori at school, 3 spoke some

Tokelauan, 2 spoke Samoan, and 1 spoke Tongan at school.

Twenty-five of the 27 children attended church, where 15 (56 percent) of them spoke English, 8 Samoan, 6 Tokelauan, 5 Tongan, 3 Cook Island Maori, and 1 spoke the Niue language. None of the children spoke Maori at church.

Parents were asked if their child spoke a Pacific Islands language only (with no English) at the early childhood centre, and how the child found it changing to an English-only classroom. Just over half (14, i.e., 52 percent) of the children had no difficulty. However, 6 had some difficulty and the parents of 2 children said they were very uncomfortable with English only.

The majority of the parents said that the primary school their child attended did not teach Pacific Islands languages, but 8 thought that the school taught some Samoan. All but 2 of the parents who reported the school did not teach any Pacific language would have liked their home language to be taught at school.

When asked how the schools could support their home language and culture, 16 (59 percent) of the parents suggested this could be done through having Pacific Islands language classes at school. Another 10 parents said that it was important for schools to allow their children to continue speaking their home language at school. In addition, 9 teachers recommended having cultural days and cultural festivals at school, and 8 wanted qualified teachers from their own ethnic backgrounds to teach at the school.

Twenty parents (74 percent) said that they did not know what the language policy was at the school their child attended. Their responses included "don't know", "not sure", "no idea". When asked if they had ever discussed the language policy as a school community, almost all of the parents replied that they had not done this. This appears one area where parents need more information and communication with the school.

In general, there was expressed willingness on the parents' part to help with their child's learning. All of the parents said that they could see an advantage in taking part in their child's learning. When asked how, 20 (77 percent) replied that they could be encouraging and generally supportive, 12 (46 percent) said they could help with homework, 8 responded that they could read books, and 4 commented on communication with the child or suggested that they could give the child wider experiences.

Further Comments from the Parents about Transition

The interviewers offered the parents the opportunity to ask any questions, and to make any further comments about transition to school. Almost half of the parents had no questions. Three parents reminded the interviewer that they would like summary feedback on the study. Seven parents raised a variety of other questions, showing their willingness to contribute to children's transition to school from Pacific Islands early childhood centres. For example:

> Is there anything we as parents can do to assist with this project?

The questions raised by one or two parents support the usefulness to them of future longitudinal research:

> Would any benefits (from the punanga) be ongoing throughout the schooling system?

Parents made a range of additional comments. The most prevalent was a reiteration that they would like summary information about the research findings (6 parents) and/or that they believed the Pacific Islands early childhood centre provided a good basis for school (5 parents). Their comments included:

> I hope that this interview will become a document to bring all suggestions in reality for the future of our Pacific children living here in Aotearoa.

> The punanga has prepared my daughter before she entered school. I will appreciate a copy of the summary of this transition programme.

Other parents made statements supporting the need for tolerance and cultural continuity in the primary schools.

> You feel there is discrimination being a Pacific Islander and feel that teachers should not voice their discrimination when children are in their presence. Teachers should be discreet when children are around. I would like to see a strong cultural flow right through. Give kids the opportunity to express themselves whilst learning about others.

Early Childhood Teachers' Views

Six of the 11 early childhood teachers thought that the schools should teach Pacific Islands languages, and another 5 said the school should promote special cultural events, groups, or activities. As one teacher stated:

> The school should support their [P.I. children's] cultural performances and cultural groups and the school should involve the children in the drama and singing of their groups.

When asked "How do you suggest the school might go about maintaining the language and cultures of Pacific Islands children?", 7 teachers reported that employing community people would help, for example:

> Schools should employ community people to support language and cultural activities.

> Inviting the children from the centre to participate in their cultural activities and for the staff to share with the rest of the children the culture of the Cook Islands.

> Employ more Pacific Islands teachers and teacher aides, community people to come to school and support or teach cultural activities, for example, weaving, carving, preparation of food, administration, making leis, speech making, etc.

> Pacific children involved in drama and singing. If no Pacific group in place, they [the school] should ask for outside help, for example, parents and aides to help with the needs of the child. More understanding of the Pacific culture.

Five teachers also considered that the schools should allow the children to practise their own language. These goals would be met using help from individuals in the Pacific Islands community.

School Teachers' Views

When the teachers were asked about the language the Pacific Islands children spoke in the classroom, they responded that of the 27 children, 26 (96 percent) spoke English. Three children are bilingual as they spoke Samoan and English, 1 spoke Tongan and English, while another spoke Maori and English. The children who came from families where grandparents spoke their ethnic language, and the parents emphasised the use of Samoan language at home, seemed to be more fluent in their ethnic language when first starting school. One child has mixed parents—Maori and Tongan—so the child speaks 3 languages, including English. However, here are some responses given by some teachers:

> Samoan—and for a long time she was reluctant to speak. She spoke Samoan quietly to other Samoan children. She seems quite overcome in school.
>
> English and occasionally Samoan.
>
> Speaks Maori, Tongan and English.

The school teachers also described the languages children spoke in the playground. All 27 children spoke English, except for 5 bilingual children, 2 of whom spoke Samoan, 2 Tongan, and 1 Tokelauan. Some of the responses were:

> Child speaks predominantly English but speaks Samoan with her cousins.
>
> English and Tokelauan if she is with Tokelauan children or with her brother.

Language Spoken at Home

Teachers said that, at home, 24 (89 percent) of the children spoke English while 7 spoke Samoan, another 7 children spoke Tokelauan, and 4 spoke Tongan at home. This confirms that the children in the study generally speak their own ethnic language quite comfortably in their homes. Some responses from the teachers of children with mixed parents are as follows:

> Definitely English. Her father speaks English, but I would say both English and Cook Islands Maori.
>
> Tokelauan, Samoan and [English]. One part is Tokelauan and one is Samoan, as far as know. I doubt if English is spoken much. These are about 3 generations.
>
> Both English and Tokelauan because the grandparents seem to be the caregivers.

The teachers responded that, at the early childhood centres, 15 (56 percent) children spoke English, 6 spoke Samoan, the other 6 spoke Tokelauan, 4 spoke Tongan, 2 spoke Cook Islands Maori, and another 2 spoke Niue before starting school. There were 6 other teachers who didn't know the languages spoken as they had no contacts with the Pacific Islands centres. Some of these responses are stated below:

> I don't know. I have no contact with the centre.
>
> Can't comment, don't know.

> Don't know—[teacher started at the school a few weeks after the child did, but didn't have a lot of information. Two of the 20 children's profiles came through from early childhood centres]. Would like parent to bring the child's profile to school to see what children are at.
>
> I don't know as I didn't teach her when she started school.
>
> I don't know—that's one thing I would like to be able to visit, to go in objectively to know what to expect. So I can set real expectations.

One teacher answered that she knew it was the Tokelauan language the child spoke at the centre, but he was very quiet and was not making much progress in communication:

> Tokelauan. But he was actually very, very, quiet—he was not making much progress in communication.

The 22 school teachers were asked "To what extent do you think that the school should support the home languages and cultures of Pacific Islands children?" Twelve (55 percent) teachers wanted to support the children using parents to help with cultural activities such as celebrations of White Sundays, hair cutting, birthdays, and cultural entertainment activities including art and craft. Ten (45 percent) teachers said that the schools should employ Pacific Islands teachers and community people to support the teaching and delivery of Pacific Islands languages and culture. On the other hand, 3 teachers wanted the schools to provide professional development for existing teachers to learn the Pacific Islands languages and culture. Eleven (50 percent) of the teachers had other suggestions, some of which are outlined below:

> Depends on the percentage of Pacific Islands children. We should probably make an effort even for the minority and the curriculum content to assist with their learning. Because of the shortage of time you tend to focus on the majority, and what is expected [of them] to learn in terms of English.
>
> To a very high extent. I think it is important that we are seen as supporting who they are and where they are from.
>
> Supporting by employing good language teachers from the children's ethnic groups and encourage participation by family members.
>
> The increase in number of Pacific Islands children enrolled in the school is because parents want children to learn English in school and playground. They want to perfect the English language so that their future education and work place needs will be met.

Five teachers said the schools should provide the teaching of Pacific Islands languages and culture and some of their comments were:

> Provide the teaching of Samoan language and incorporate into the classroom in all areas. Religious education should be integrated, e.g., children learn to sign the cross in their own language, singing hymns and prayers and dances.
>
> If my daughter uses her home language and chooses to write her stories in Samoan in school, I would value it.

> Pacific Islands teachers should be employed to teach Pacific Islands language in schools. There's quite a good mix of ethnic children here but there's no Polynesian club and particularly no facilities for holding these

Most of the teachers in the study said that they do not have ethnic languages taught in their schools except for Polynesian club once a month for some schools while other schools have it once a week. However, one school positively supports the Pacific Islands and Maori language because they have the human resources to teach them.

The teachers were also asked "How does your school continue to assist and support the home languages and cultures of Pacific Islands children starting primary school?" Their responses included the provision of Polynesian clubs from 10 (45 percent) teachers, teaching languages and greetings were given by 8 teachers, having Pacific Islands teachers were the responses from 6 of the teachers, establishing of language classes from 5 teachers, and 4 teachers said that allowing and encouraging children to speak their own language in school. One school has human resources and therefore teaches Samoan, Tokelauan, Cook Islands Maori, and NZ Maori. This school also has a kura kaupapa class as well.

> We have Samoan teachers, four of them, and therefore we are [able] to resource and cater for the children's language needs. We have a Samoan bilingual class which is operated every day and a Samoan 1st language class once a week as well as Tokelauan and Cook Island 1st language class. We also have a Maori bilingual class and a kura kaupapa.

One school does not support the home language because of the number of ethnic children represented in the school, according to a teacher. An example of the comments is as follows:

> I don't think at the moment the school does because of the numbers. Not many Samoan parents live in the community and it's not necessary to translate newsletters into ethnic languages because it's not a large number of multicultural groups. The school's community language is mainly English.

They discussed practices in their classrooms, in response to the question, "In your classroom, how do you support the home languages and cultures of Pacific Islands children starting school?" Sixteen (73 percent) teachers were in favour of encouraging languages and cultural activities in class. Thirteen (59 percent) teachers said they supported and encouraged children to continue using their own language, and 2 teachers said that they could not assist because of lack of knowledge. Four teachers had other opinions, and some examples of comments follow:

> Singing Samoan songs in class, learning the slap dance "sasa", my own experiences, e.g., in preparation of food, story telling, story writing, legends, Art work, greetings, talking about families and integrating Social Studies with cultural activities.

> Not very much but every second year we hold cultural concerts. There are times when children participate in cultural performances depending on the human resources. I encourage Pacific Islands children to use their own languages, e.g., by teaching a prayer but at times I find them reluctant to do them.

I can't really because of my lack of knowledge.

Through topic studies in class and include Pacific Islands topics.

Greetings and farewells. At the moment they're just token gestures. I'm trying to do more for every child in the classroom.

We have Book Week programme where parents were involved in telling legends and stories to the class.

The school teachers provided suggestions about how the schools might go about maintaining the languages and cultures of Pacific Islands children. Eleven (50 percent) teachers suggested that schools might maintain Pacific Islands language and cultures through changing language policy; and 11 teachers wanted Pacific groups or Polynesian clubs in school. Nine teachers suggested inviting community people into the schools to help. Six teachers commented that the school curriculum should include Pacific languages and cultures, while 2 teachers suggested funding be available in order to employ Pacific Islands teachers and to carry out cultural activities.

Five teachers had other suggestions and examples of these are as follows:

Training and employing Pacific Islands teachers to teach language and culture. Establish language policy for the school and invite the community people to assist in language and cultural programmes.

Because I'm unaware of what the children have brought with them, I don't know what they've got to share. So I can't take advantage of it. I'd like to narrow the gap.

Having more visual resources, e.g., learning tapes, videos and more Pacific Islands resources.

I think it has a lot to do with funding. If we had more money we would be able to employ teachers and establish classes or pay teacher aide and community people to teach these cultures to the children.

We need focused time and cultural focused electives and clubs that used to happen in school. We teach Maori 15 minutes a day and [this] should be the same for other cultural development. I felt it was something very special and quite privileged when ethnic students used to perform their own cultural dances, music and performances.

Further Comments from the School Teachers about Transition

Eight teachers stated the importance of having more trained Pacific Islands teachers in school to aid the linguistic needs of Pacific Islands students' transition, and 5 teachers commented about the necessity of having the children's progress reports sent to school so they could place the children in appropriate levels. Eleven (41 percent) teachers made other comments and one is stated below:

I would appreciate some information on the child about her/his preschool experience. The last child I had from kohanga reo brought all her art work in a big folder, since started in the preschool, and this helped me to begin a new programme based on the information that I received. The parents of Pacific Islands children could collate the child's work from ā'oga 'āmata and

take this to school at enrolment time. This child is quite sensitive—she gets upset easily when children say "mean" things. She is an only child at home. I just give her a cuddle and she's all right again, She's very kind to other children—she's the first to comfort other children if they are hurt. I know we're not doing much for Pacific Islands children, but as far as I am concerned there have been no problems. She [child] loves school. Hopefully the information collected will make the transition to school easier.

There were 6 teachers who commented very positively about the smooth transition of Pacific Islands children to primary school as they had learnt social skills and others came already speaking English, which made it easier for them to adapt to class routines and follow instructions. Some teachers suggested some good ideas in order to make the transition smooth for Pacific Islands children. Some of the examples of these remarks are written below:

> For A's situation, she's making very good progress academically and [is] completely sociable. She's unusually successful in any group. She's one of the top readers in the class and reading at an 8-year-old level.

> L's transition to school was very smooth because he knew English. He understood the routines and instructions that he was given. That helped definitely.

> The B's kindy and this school, have regular contacts regarding children's progress in schools. Quite a lot of information is relayed in our visits and I can see physical, intellectual and behavioural needs early which helps with class placements and early school intervention, i.e., teacher aid support language and speech assessment. And I would like the Pacific Islands centres to do the same. I am not aware of A's report from a'oga 'amata. It would be useful if children came with reports. The human contact from Pacific Islands centres and school is invaluable. Establishing relationship between Pacific Islands. Early childhood centres and school staff are critical to all of this transferring of information easily and regularly. The kindy's head teacher and I have very good professional relationship and all our information sharing happens frequently and easily. We don't receive written reports from kindy but the regular contact is very useful.

> I feel I would like to know more about the environment the child has been used to—about the early childhood centre. If we had information we could have included this in the programme, e.g., has child been used to shared morning tea, language spoken at early childhood centres. I can see how difficult it is for schools—we have so many demands on what is to be taught. The curriculum is demanding on teachers at school. L. is a well-adjusted little person who is doing extremely well.

> M. fits in well and speaks good English. She's reading at her age level and is enthusiastic about her learning. She seems quite confident. She interacts well with her peers and teachers.

There were also other opinions expressed by some teachers, for example, they were interested to know the results of the research, they stressed the importance of communication between home and school and of having early childhood experience,

which is beneficial to the transition. Other teachers commented that they could not say what the child was like at school as they knew she/he would be hit at home. Below are some of the examples of these comments:

> I would be interested in what the results of your survey are. Sometimes the teachers feel they can't really say what a child has been like at school because they knew the child will be hit at home. So there has been protection of the child at school. There are some differences in behaviour standards; the reprimanding of children is a bit more violent at home, whereas we suggest that [as punishment] something be denied them. It's not all families.

> It depends on the individual child and their family. Some settle quickly, others take longer. Some come with no skills, others come with lots. Generally most come very happy to start school and settle quickly.

> To have a better communication between home and school and centre and school will narrow the gap. More contacts and visits between the two.

> It's probably easier to have some preschool experience rather than coming straight to school.

One teacher suggested that more encouragement and positive reinforcement from the home would boost self-esteem of the child. However, a second-year teacher mentioned her inexperience in dealing with children who generally had no idea of how to listen. Other teachers commented about the need for the school to be made as comfortable as possible to all children during transition periods. Some examples of these comments are as follows:

> More encouragement and positive reinforcement at home will help the child boost his self-esteem.

> I haven't been into the early childhood centres. This is my second year—I'm not hugely experienced in dealing with it. You have to put yourself on a different level—I've got used to it. I'd like a really good strategy please to teach children to listen. They just don't seem to have any idea of how to listen. One child "couldn't decode and break down" what I was saying, when I said not to touch the bird in the cage.

> It took [child] a couple of months to understand—listening skills—to get a book from the library when other children were doing it. But her parents were very supportive academically—and her [older] brother helped [knowing what to do with books]. Why can't early childhood centre send a summary report on each child—e.g., language spoken, listening skills? They are obviously spending formative years at these places—there needs to be open communication so the support network is there from the start.

> It should be made as comfortable as possible for all children, and the children experience success from day one and feel good about themselves in the classroom context.

In conclusion, 2 teachers wanted to have the feedback information of this study given to them. It is also important that teachers of Pacific Islands early childhood centres and primary schools share the results and information so they can plan curriculum subjects according to the needs of the children.

Summary

In general, children appear to speak predominantly English at school. They speak a Pacific Islands language at the early childhood centre, and at home, with some English as well. In comparison with the adults' comment about Pacific Islands language use at school, very few of the children reported speaking a Pacific Islands language in that context. Most parents and many teachers expressed considerable interest in the schools' supporting the children's home language and culture in the school setting.

Language Policy Content of the Schools' Charters

5b What is the language policy of the school (as stated in the charter)?

Altogether, there were 19 schools involved in the study. These schools enrolled the 27 Pacific Islands graduates from Pacific Islands early childhood services. Of the 19 school charters, 8 included specific references to Pacific Islands students, 9 included a general comment on cultural diversity, and 2 had no cultural specification.

Specific Reference to Pacific Islands Students

Some excerpts from the 8 school charters which refer specifically to Pacific Islands students are listed below (each school is ascribed a number—in brackets):

- Every child will be aware of the dual cultural heritage of New Zealand and the multi-cultural nature of our society. The Board of Trustees will ensure that this school's policies and practices seek to achieve equitable outcomes for students of both their religious, ethnic, cultural, social, family and class backgrounds, and irrespective of their ability or disability. They will include programmes that redress existing inequities and address the current and future needs of students, particularly:

Maori	women and girls
Pacific Island	students with disabilities
Other ethnic groups	students with other special learning needs. (4)

- Twenty-seven percent of families reflect cultures other than English. Thirty-seven percent from the Pacific Islands. They will include programmes that redress existing inequities and address the current and future needs of students, particularly:

Maori	women and girls
Pacific Island	students with disabilities
Other ethnic groups	students with other special learning needs.

- To provide learning opportunities that acknowledge and promote understanding of the many cultures in our community. (11)

- Respect for the ethnic diversity of New Zealand and New Zealand's role in the Pacific. (14)

- The School Board of Trustees has made a commitment to work towards the National Education Goals and will be measured against them. Respect for the diverse ethnic and cultural heritage of New Zealand people, with acknowledgment of the unique place of Maori, and New Zealand's role in the Pacific, and as a member of the international community of nations. (1)

- Samoan language support for learning in English for new entrants. A first language programme designed to support the first language of enrolled students. Availability of religious instruction. (13).

School number 13 above has 4 different languages (Samoan, Tokelauan, Cook Islands, and NZ Maori) taught there. The combination of Pacific Islands and Maori teachers on the staff helps considerably in the language development of the school curriculum for the high population of Pacific Islands children in the school.

One of the 8 schools went to the extreme of contacting their Samoan parents by using Samoan language in all correspondence, and the charter comments below reflect this:

> Make provision for the Samoan Community to be consulted in their own language. GOAL "A": To enhance learning by ensuring that the curriculum is non-sexist and non-racist and that any disadvantage experienced at the school by students, parents or staff members because of gender or religious, ethnic, cultural, social or family background is acknowledged and addressed. (15)

Cultural Diversity in General

Nine of 19 schools refer in general to cultural diversity but not specifically to the exact ethnic groups. In fact, 6 of these schools with almost 90 percent of Pacific Islands children do not teach a Pacific Island language but have a Polynesian club. One of these schools has the Maori language class operating, but not many Maori children attend the school. The charter comments from some of these schools include:

> The school's plans and policies will be implemented in ways that are sensitive to the cultural backgrounds and values of individual children. (16)

> To value the cultural diversity of our school. To include education in Te Reo Maori where appropriate, in accordance with the Treaty of Waitangi. To foster the development of attitudes which encourage accepting, valuing and caring for each person within the school community. To ensure that all students, irrespective of learning needs, gender, religion, ethnic origin, cultural or family background have equal access to all opportunities offered by the school. (10)

> To be open and accepting of different cultures so that we celebrate difference. To respond positively to equity issues and through sensitivity in all areas of the school demonstrate respect for all cultures. (5)

> The school's plans and policies will be implemented in ways that are sensitive to the cultural backgrounds and values of individual children and their families. This includes an understanding of the unique position of the Maori people in New Zealand. (2)

Exclusion of Cultural Specifications

Two of the schools do not have relevant specification about the inclusion of ethnic programmes in their charters.

Charters and School Practices

It is imperative to mention that although 8 school charters specifically mentioned their respect of Pacific Islands culture, not all of these schools actually operate or establish language classes or implement ethnic cultural activities in schools. Only 2 schools provide the teaching of Samoan language, and 1 of these 2 schools includes Cook Islands, Tokelauan, and New Zealand Maori languages in their daily programmes.

There is a similar trend among the 9 schools who have general comments about the acknowledgment of cultural diversity and equity. Not all of these 9 schools implement cultural activities in their daily programmes, and one of the reasons given by the teachers is the non-availability of funding to employ ethnic teachers and community people to teach these activities, and purchase resources.

In fact, there are a few schools who have established Polynesian clubs, which only operate for 20 minutes on a weekly basis, and others operate only once a month. The establishment of Polynesian clubs in some schools, and the celebration of Pacific studies topics once a year in other schools, make them generally feel that this is their contribution to respect Pacific cultures and language. However, some of these schools have a very high population of Pacific Islands students.

One school charter specifically stated their respect for Pacific and other ethnic languages and cultures, but, according to the teachers, the parents of these students want their children to learn English alone. Some children, mainly Samoans, live far away from the school, but the parents choose to send their children to this school mainly for the purpose of obtaining English only as the language of instruction. The children get their tuition of Samoan language from their grandparents and the church. So this particular school does not teach a Pacific language. An example of their charter comments is as follows:

- The Board of Trustees will ensure that this school's policies and practices seek to achieve equitable outcomes for students of both sexes, for rural and urban students; for students from all religions, ethnic, cultural, social, and class backgrounds, and for all students irrespective of their ability or disability. They will include programmes that redress existing inequities and address the current and future needs of students, particularly:

  Maori women and girls
  Pacific Island students with disabilities
  Students with other special learning needs
  Other ethnic groups. (17)

Finally, the school charters from 17 of the 19 schools have included the general objective of respecting the cultural diversity of the school community. Some of the charters state the National Education objectives regarding the plan to implement programmes to suit the ethnic children's needs but do not fulfil them. It appears that some

schools may insert these aims in their charters with the intention of conforming with requirements, for example, of the Ministry of Education, the Education Review Office, and the professionals.

Overall Summary: Issues for Children, Parents, and Teachers

This chapter has described the main results of the study on transition to school. The chapter provides brief summary comparisons of the comments from children, parents, and teachers.

The following section summarises and highlights the main findings and issues for children, parents, early childhood teachers, and school teachers, and findings regarding the school charters.

Children

Learning Activities: Likes and Dislikes

The children enjoyed a range of learning activities at home, early childhood centres, and school. Fourteen children (52 percent) liked drawing as a favourite activity in the home, 16 (59 percent) specified drawing as something they liked doing at school, and 12 children (44 percent) mentioned it as a favourite activity at the early childhood centre.

The difference among the 3 contexts was that children were more likely to identify outdoor play as their favourite activity at school than at home. Nineteen (70 percent) of the children specified outdoor play as their favourite activity at school, whereas only 6 children mentioned it as a favourite activity at home.

In the early childhood centre context, cultural activities were important to the children. Fifteen (56 percent) children said that they liked culturally related activities, for example, music, singing, and dancing, at the early childhood centre.

Literacy-related activities were relatively popular at home and at school. For 13 (48 percent) children, reading was something they liked doing at home, and for 16 (59 percent) reading was a favourite activity at school. When asked what they would do if they were trying to read something hard, the children most frequently responded that they would ask the teacher for help.

Experiences of Transition to School

Twenty (74 percent) children preferred to have a family member or other adult stay at the school with them. The children generally enjoyed school, especially meeting their friends and making new ones. In fact, their choice of primary schools was mainly based on having relatives and friends from their early childhood centres there. The children also liked the bigger playgrounds and better facilities and play equipment in schools.

Being lonely and bullied are some of the dislikes mentioned by the children. Some children did not like "mean" teachers, and others missed the use of their mother tongue (first language).

Suggestions

When asked what the schools could do to make them happy, 11 children (41 percent) wanted more time devoted to play, while 9 wanted to have more drawing or colouring

activities. Just a few children suggested that they needed computers, more books, and good happy teachers.

Parents

Similarities and Differences between Home, School, and Early Childhood Centres

Twenty-two parents (81 percent) stated that both home and early childhood centres provided education, while 12 (44 percent) parents specified that home and school are the same in that they provide education. The main difference for them was the absence of Pacific Islands language and culture at school. They were also concerned about the use of inappropriate language at school. At home and early childhood centres, no swear words were allowed, whereas in schools many children heard swearing in the school grounds and in some cases inside the classroom.

Learning Expected at Home and School

Parents stated that it is important that at home children learn literacy, respect, language, culture, mathematical concepts, and that they learn to help each other. They also mentioned hygiene, safety, and spiritual routines as other important areas of learning in the home.

Twenty-three (85 percent) parents wanted the schools to offer intellectual challenges for their children, and to maintain and value their culture and language. Fifteen (56 percent) parents wanted the schools to accept the children as they were and to ensure that learning was actually taking place across all subjects.

Transition to School

When the parents were asked about their perceptions of the transition, 19 (70 percent) of them responded positively and said that the children settled very well because having siblings at the school helped. Three parents replied that their children did not settle well because of limited English-language ability.

Twenty-seven parents chose their children's primary schools based on locality, 12 (44 percent) gave reasons of having siblings or friends at the school, and 11 (41 percent) said that the reputation of the school or its teaching methods influenced their decision.

Suggestions Regarding Transition

Communications regarding the child's progress is very much appreciated, and parents suggested then that any concerns about the child should be addressed immediately. However, the majority of parents thought that their children had settled well into school.

Finally, the parents said that they would appreciate copy of a summary of the research for their information and preparation with regards to the children's transition to primary schools.

Early Childhood Teachers

Similarities and Differences between Home, School, and Early Childhood Centres

Offering education is common to homes, early childhood centres, and schools. Use of ethnic language, discipline, routines, structure, and physical environments seemed to be the differences experienced across the 3 contexts.

Eight of the 11 early childhood teachers reported "reading" as an activity practised in

all 3 settings. They also frequently specified Pacific Islands music, dancing, language, and mathematics as activities found in all contexts.

It is worth noting that 15 of the children from the study came from unlicensed centres where they had limited times in the mornings, hence the culturally related activities formed a large part of the programme.

Learning Expected Prior to School Entry

The early childhood teachers expected the children to have literacy skills and to be able to write their own names when starting school. Seven of the 11 early childhood teachers expressed concerns about the lack of ethnic language continuity when the Pacific Islands children moved on to primary schools.

Transition to School

Ten (91 percent) of the early childhood teachers said they had some contact with the parents when children first started school and 5 reported that it is better if the parents stay with the child, if only for the first day. They discussed the Pacific Islands resources available in the centres and commented that similar resources would be less available to children when they moved to schools.

School Teachers

Similarities and Differences between Home, School, and Early Childhood Centres

The teachers' views showed some similarities with parents' views with regards to the provision of education in the 3 contexts, and 14 (64 percent) teachers stated that caring and a secure environment were other similarities in the 3 settings.

Routines, discipline, and rules were some of the similarities mentioned by 11 teachers with a specific observation of religion and spiritual aspects as experienced and practised in both the home and early childhood centres.

Learning Expected Prior to School Entry

When teachers were asked about their expectations of the children when they started school, 15 (68 percent) teachers generally mentioned social skills, language and culture, respect, and basic knowledge of English. When asked about the skills they expected from Pacific Islands children, 14 (64 percent) teachers required social, mathematical, and communication skills. Thirteen (59 percent) teachers expected literacy skills, for example, love of books, reading and having book experience. Twelve (55 percent) teachers said that discipline and routines were other skills expected. Twelve (55 percent) teachers said that they would accept the children as they were and expected them to have confidence in communicating with peers and teachers.

Concerns about Expectations

When the teachers were asked if they had concerns about their expectations, 18 (82 percent) teachers reported that the children spoke limited English, were shy, and had limited listening skills. Two teachers had concerns about the children's limited literacy skills, and 2 teachers mentioned their own inability to help Pacific Islands children. Ten

(56 percent) teachers had other concerns which included modern technology taking over imaginative play, and children lacking comprehension or being moody. It is important that teachers do not have too high expectations of these children.

When asked about how they coped with these concerns, 7 teachers said they had special programmes, 6 said they had peer support and a buddy system, 5 teachers mentioned parents' involvement in children's activities, and 1 teacher suggested offering challenges to children.

Transition to School

The school teachers were asked about their views of the transition, and 10 (45 percent) teachers said they preferred not to have the parents stay in classroom when children started school, as children tend to be clingy and unable to concentrate on class activities or explore the classroom environment. Seven teachers wanted the parents to stay with the child at the early stage. However, 21 (95 percent) teachers said that they had an open-door policy and that parents were most welcome to come to school any time.

The teachers stated that the children with parents from more than one ethnic group (for example, one Pakeha or Maori parent) spoke only English throughout the transition across the 3 contexts. This helped them to settle and communicate well when starting school.

Lower adult-child ratios were noticed in schools. Not many parents attended during class sessions, while in Pacific Islands early childhood centres or groups (PILGs), grandparents and parents often stayed until the end of the day.

Eighteen (82 percent) teachers generally commented that communication between early childhood centres and schools was very important. Thirteen (59 percent) teachers said the information about this study would help early childhood teachers to prepare for transition.

Language Experiences and Issues

In general, children appear to speak predominantly English at school. They speak a Pacific Islands language at the early childhood centre, and at home. Twelve (45 percent) teachers wanted to have parents support the language and cultural activities at school, while 10 (45 percent) teachers wanted the schools to employ Pacific Islands teachers and community people to teach and deliver Pacific Islands languages and cultures.

The need for teacher education on these languages and cultures was expressed. It was also noted that there is a need to ensure that teacher trainees experience different early childhood centres, so they understand from where children are coming. Most parents expressed considerable interest in the schools' supporting the children's home language.

However, the parents noticed with resentment the use of foul language and bullying among children at schools.

Charters

This chapter also provided an analysis and outline of the content of the charters of the schools the children attended. In summary, there were several main issues regarding charters. Seventeen of the 19 school charters specifically stated that they respected Pacific Islands languages and cultures, but only 2 schools in the study had actually established Pacific Islands language and culture classes. A few schools established Polynesian clubs

which operated for 20 minutes a week, or 1 hour a month in some schools. The question arising is whether this provides sufficient and appropriate acknowledgment of Pacific Islands cultures in schools. Other schools gave administrative reasons for not providing these cultural activities, for example, lack of resources and funding. On the other hand, one school's teacher stated that the parents had actually wanted their children to learn only English, hence the non-provision of Pacific Islands languages in their school.

The next chapter discusses major implications of these results, and provides suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This chapter synthesises the information reported in the preceding chapters. Methodological issues and implications are discussed. Drawing on the main emergent themes, some key issues are identified, and suggestions for future research directions are outlined.

Research Methods

This research offers a model for interviews with participants from Pacific Islands communities. The inclusion of interviewers from each of the 5 different Pacific Islands groups was important to ensure that the research approaches developed were culturally appropriate for Cook Islands, Niue, Samoan, Tokelauan, and Tongan participants. Members of the project advisory committee pointed out that this research appears to be the first to document the interview process for and by members of all 5 ethnic communities.

Ethical considerations, research instruments, and procedures were all scrutinised for cultural appropriateness. The 5 interviewers contributed to developing approaches to consent and confidentiality that were culturally relevant, and consistent with the NZCER (1998) ethics statement. All interviewers, and members of the advisory committee, had the opportunity to check the draft interview schedules for cultural appropriateness. Chapter 3 includes a brief description of how each interviewer endeavoured to adopt culturally sensitive procedures when interviewing family members. It was anticipated that this would provide a preliminary guide for future research with Cook Islands, Niue, Samoan, Tokelauan, and Tongan families.

This study signifies the importance of interviewers having links to Pacific Islands communities, as this helps set up comfortable situations, ensures cultural sensitivity, and reduces language barriers. The research process provided training for interviewers who were not necessarily familiar with research methods, but had close, long-standing connections with their communities. McNaughton et al. (1996) support the inclusion of training of Pacific researchers as an integral part of educational research contracts. The importance of the training component of this research affirms and extends McNaughton et al.'s comments.

This study documents transition to school from the perspective of Cook Islands, Niue, Samoan, Tokelauan, and Tongan children, interviewed by people from their own ethnic communities; it also extends current knowledge of interviewing 5-year-old children about their experiences. Chapter 3 includes brief comments from the 5 interviewers about their experiences of developing a rapport with Cook Islands, Niue, Samoan, Tokelauan, and Tongan children.

The participants' clear requests for a summary of the findings of the research highlight the relevance of providing feedback in an appropriately accessible form.

Key Issues

Language and Cultural Continuity

Demographic data presented in chapter 2 confirm that the Pacific Islands population of New Zealand is young. The data also show that the overall numbers of children enrolled in Pacific Islands early childhood services in general has increased during the 1990s, and that the proportion of the children in Pacific Islands early childhood centres has grown steadily since 1994 (tables 2 and 3). The latter trend indicates that more Pacific Islands early childhood centres are becoming licensed (*see* Mara, 1998b).

One pertinent question arising from this study concerns the extent to which children will retain the languages and cultural practices fostered within these early childhood services as they progress through school.

Bale (1993) examined the role of language in readiness for school and asserted that each child's behaviour revealed different interests and different levels of communication. According to Bale, memories of positive language experience gave children feelings of confidence and high self-esteem, competency and control, and promoted a willingness to stay involved. Stipek (1988) and Benton (1995) also support this.

Parents participating in this study articulated concerns about the maintenance of their children's Pacific Islands language and culture. There was also a tendency for parents to report that they did not know what the language policy was at the school their child attended.

Funding for Language Provision in Schools

Data on the schools' decile ratings, summarised in chapter 3, show that a disproportionate number of children attended schools in the lowest socioeconomic stratum. The student population at 9 of the 19 schools included more than 30 percent who identified as Pacific Islanders. Looking at the findings from the interviews with the school teachers in this study, only 2 of the 19 schools provided teaching of Pacific Islands children's ethnic languages. The remaining 17 either chose to have Polynesian clubs 1 hour a week or to integrate Pacific studies once a month or term with other curriculum subjects.

Having insufficient funding seems to be the cause of the non-provision of Pacific Islands languages in some schools. This is also supported by Sauvao's (1999) interviews which showed that principals usually gave administrative reasons as to why language continuity could not be fully achieved in their programme. It appears that under-resourced schools will be more likely to confront barriers to furthering language activities of graduates from Pacific Islands early childhood services.

Partnership between Home and School

The findings from the interviews re-affirm the relevance of home-school-community relationships to parents, children, and teachers. The partnership between homes, early childhood centres, and schools is vital for the stakeholders of the study.

Interview data suggest that continuing communications regarding progress of students in the 3 contexts, and regular contact between the early childhood centres and the primary schools, are likely to assist the transition process.

Success Models

One success model for this study is the Pacific Islands School-Parent-Community Liaison Project, reported on by Diane Mara (1998a). Another is the Strengthening Education project in Mangere and Otara on early literacy (e.g., MacDonald et al., 1999). The findings of the present study support the need for continuing development and uptake of models to enhance the connections among schools and Pacific Islands early childhood services, families, and communities.

Expectations of Teachers and Parents

The early childhood teachers interviewed in this study expected children to have literacy skills and to be able to write their own names when starting school. They were also concerned about the lack of continuity of ethnic languages when children moved on to primary school.

Primary school teachers generally expected children to come with social skills, language and culture, mathematical and literacy skills, respect, and basic knowledge of English. However, some teachers stated that they would accept children as they were, and that children need to be confident about communicating with peers and teachers. Findings by Renwick (1997) suggest that teachers are likely to emphasise that "the main thing is the child's attitude to new experiences" (p. 44). This includes being curious and keen to learn.

The parents' views show some similarity to those of the teachers. They wanted the children to learn literacy, respect, language, culture, and mathematical concepts, and to help each other in the home. They expected the schools to offer intellectual challenges for their children, and to assist in the maintenance of their language and culture. Parents also expected the schools to address any concerns about their children immediately. Some parents expressed concern about the uncomfortable transition for children who have limited English. However, the majority of parents reported that their children had no problems when they first started school. Other children settled well because they had siblings and friends at the same school.

Hidden Curriculum

This topic was not planned as a focus for the interview questions. However, the findings of this study have important implications related to the "hidden curriculum".

When the children were asked what they disliked about school, 11 (41 percent) specified being hurt or bullied. Four children and 3 parents also specified physical aggression or fighting as a difficulty experienced at the time of starting school. This caused fearful attitudes among some youngsters when they first started primary school.

Bullying is clearly recognised as a problem in primary school. Blatchford (1989) carried out research in Britain to address this issue. His suggested improvements included having more adult supervision and making separate arrangements for the youngest children in school.

A survey about children bullying and their experience of being bullied was conducted by a Norwegian psychologist, Dan Olweus, in a school north of Wellington. Olweus

found that 57 percent of children surveyed were ambivalent or didn't like school much, and 144 children (58 percent) said they had been bullied. Only 27 percent felt comfortable about approaching a teacher when they were bullied, and much bullying happened in the classroom or toilets rather than out of school time (Matheson, 1997).

In a recent report on NZCER's competent children study, Wylie, Thompson, and Lythe (1999) found that the parents of children aged 8 also mentioned behaviours associated with bullying such as teasing, unkindness, rudeness to parents, fighting or tantrums, and even cruelty to animals. Further, Maxwell and Carrol-Lind's (1997) study about the impact of bullying on year 12 (forms 1 and 2) children shows bullying to be a common and hurtful experience.

It is assumed that schools have rules on bullying and swearing, but several parents in the present study appeared concerned as to whether these behaviours are regularly monitored.

The parents generally chose the schools for their children based on the geographical situation, reputation of the school, teaching methods, or—for some parents—because of their religion.

Curriculum Continuity

In view of the interview experiences of parents and teachers in this study, it is advisable for early childhood centres and schools to liaise and consult about curricula and policy documents. Documents for joint consultation could include Te Whāriki (the New Zealand early childhood curriculum), the DOPs (Desirable Objectives and Practices), Ta'iala (Samoan Language Curriculum), and the New Zealand Curriculum Framework.

The school teachers interviewed expressed the need for parents, children, and teachers to experience regular contact between early childhood centres and primary schools. This would allow for curriculum observations, and would enable children to meet their new teachers and become familiar with new routines and the environment.

Bradby (1995) supported this by using the situation at Pleasant Street School in Ballarat, Australia, to illustrate the key elements of a successful transition programme. The key elements include networking of early childhood teachers, discussion groups, organising kindergarten week, family gatherings, and open days. The underlying philosophy in identifying these key elements was the view that the school should be ready for the child, not vice versa.

In New Zealand, Duncan (1993) proposed that the development and education of children is a continuous process, and that good quality early childhood services contribute significantly to children's successful transition to, and readiness for, school. She also pointed out that the policy to locate early childhood education within the Ministry of Education recognised that early childhood education was an integral part of the education continuum and that care and education were inextricably intertwined.

Literacy

Research by McNaughton and colleagues has described how samples of Pacific Islands children engage in reading and writing experiences prior to school entry or in the home (e.g., McNaughton, Parr, & Smith, undated). In this study, 19 (70 percent) of the parents

wanted children to learn literacy skills at home, and 9 out of 11 early childhood teachers wanted the children to learn literacy skills in the early childhood centre, before attending school. Thirteen (59 percent) of 22 teachers expected children to come with literacy experience, for example, love of books, handling of books, identification of letters, writing, and recognition of names.

When the children were asked about what they do when trying to read something, but it is hard, 14 (52 percent) mentioned going to the teacher to ask for help. Nine children stated that they would go to a parent or other family member, and another 6 children said they would go to another peer for help. Only 2 children said they would persist by sounding out the word, and 3 commented that they would look at the pictures.

Compared with data from the Competent Children study, these findings suggest a greater tendency among the Pacific Islands children to seek assistance from people. For example, in comparison with 52 percent of the children in this study, only 27 percent of children in the Competent Children study responded that they would request help from the teacher if they encountered difficulties when reading. Wylie and Thompson (1998) reported that children who sounded words out, used a contextual strategy, or requested help from the teacher when they had reading difficulty had somewhat higher marks in word recognition than children who looked to their peers, found an easier book, gave up, did something else, or did something aggressive. These findings suggest that teachers of Pacific Islands children may be asked for help, and that seeking their help is likely to be a positive strategy for the children to adopt.

Teacher Education

The teachers in the early childhood centres and primary schools were asked about the extent to which the schools should support the home languages and cultures of Pacific Islands children. They said that early childhood centres and primary schools should provide professional development for teachers. This would enable them to teach children about the Pacific Islands languages and cultures. The comments of several school teachers reveal the importance of having teacher education (*see*, for example, comments by teachers 4 and 22 in chapter 4).

Research by Duncan (1993) supports the need for trained early childhood teachers. She found under-resourcing, poor pay, and low levels of training for many early childhood education workers. Further, drawing on research studies and reviews, Carr, May, and Podmore (2000) contend that early childhood teacher qualifications, training, and professional development are required for the effective implementation "of a national curriculum to make a positive difference for children" (p. 2).

According to Renwick (1997), "all children are different, and teachers are trained to deal with new entrants as they are when they start school, no matter what skills they have already" (p. 44). For primary school teachers, teacher education about responding to children's current level of understanding is a critical factor in transition. This is consistent with theoretical perspectives outlined in chapter 1. Teacher education which includes Vygotsky's theoretical perspectives concerning the "zone of proximal development" (outlined in chapter 1) will assist teachers to foster and guide young children's thinking and learning.

Pacific Islands Representation

The findings from the interviews suggest a need for more Pacific Islands teachers, and for Pacific Islands community involvement in schools. Seven of the 11 early childhood teachers expressed concern about children's transition to school, citing the non-continuation of their mother tongue in school. Parents of almost all the children (25 of the 27) stated that the primary school did not teach their child's Pacific Island language. However, to provide teaching in this area, more Pacific Islands teachers and community people would be needed. This suggestion is supported by comments from parents and teachers (chapter 4).

The advisory committee for this research project also suggested, on the basis of the findings, that there should be more involvement of Pacific Islands communities in schools. Furthermore, it recommended that, for equity purposes, representation of Pacific Islands people is needed in management, policy, and research areas. In this way, the educational, economic, political, and social needs and the concerns of Pacific Islands people might be further addressed.

Generalisability of Findings

This exploratory study provides some in-depth information about the experiences of a small sample of children and parents from 5 Pacific Islands groups. It also includes the views and experiences of the children's early childhood teachers and school teachers. The report includes some overall trends and percentages, matched with qualitative examples of the participants' comments. The analysis of the school charters supplies additional data.

It is important to note that this report quotes material which represents the voices of participants. However, the individual quotes presented in chapter 4 are not generalisable findings.

Future Research

Several suggestions for future research arise from this study.

- **Sampling and Location:** The extension of this study to other regions of New Zealand would be appropriate. The demographic data presented in chapter 2 show some regional variations in the enrolment of Pacific Islands children at early childhood centres (*see* table 8). In Auckland, for example, there are larger numbers of Niue children enrolled, and larger numbers of other Pacific groups not available for inclusion in the present study. Examples include Tuvalu and Fijian early childhood centres or language groups, which were not established in Wellington at the time this research was developed.

- **Other Early Childhood Services:** Further research could be carried out to investigate the ease of transition and the expectations of teachers of Pacific Islands children attending kindergartens. The demographic data in chapter 2 show that substantial numbers of Pacific Islands children are enrolled in kindergartens.

- **School Policies:** There is scope for further research on school policies. The analysis of the school charters and the interview findings of this study would provide useful background data for continuing research. Potential areas for study, suggested by the advisory committee for the present project, might include the sensitivity and readiness of schools, Education Review Office reports, school charters, boards of trustees' composition, parent involvement, and implementation of policies/charters.

- **Language and Literacy—Longitudinal Research:** Further information is needed about Pacific Islands children's language-literacy experiences as they progress through school. This might include an emphasis on the retention of home Pacific Islands language (oral and written) of several cohorts of children as they pass through the Pacific Islands early childhood centres. There may also be scope to track matched comparison groups of children who attend other early childhood services. Sauvao's (1999) study of ā'oga 'āmata children provides support for this suggestion.

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APPENDIX A

LETTERS OF CONSENT

For Parents (with translations);
Early Childhood Teachers; and
Principals

LETTERS TO PARENTS

28 May 1999

ENGLISH

Dear

Transition to School from Pacific Islands Early Childhood Services

We are writing to invite you and **[your child]** to take part in the above project. The aim of this research is to find out more about children from Pacific Islands early childhood services who are starting school. We hope to hear about the experiences of parents, children, and teachers, and to find out about how to help teachers, parents, and Pacific Islands children who are starting school.

Researchers from the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER) are carrying out this study. NZCER is an independent organisation whose purpose is to promote quality education for New Zealanders through research and resources, advice and information.

We want to interview parents, teachers (both early childhood and primary school), and children themselves, about their transition to school.

In the main study, we plan to include approximately 30 children moving from a Pacific Islands early childhood provision to school. The sample will include children who have attended language groups as well as licensed and chartered groups. The children will have turned 5 years old, and will have entered primary school late in 1998 or, early in 1999. This is why we chose your child.

The information you offer is strictly confidential to members of the NZCER research team. Your name will not be recorded on the interview notes. However, you will be given a code number to help us match up children, parents, early childhood teachers, and schools. Individuals will not be identifiable in any report from this study. At the end of this study, a copy of the summary of the research will be given to those who were involved.

If you have any questions about the study, please contact Lia Mapa (Tel: 384 7939 Ext.831).

Kind regards

Dr Val Podmore
Research Group Leader

I/We understand that what I/we say in this interview will not be written up in any report.

☐ I/we agree ☐ I/we do not agree

to being participant(s) and our child participating in the research **Transition to School from Pacific Islands Early Childhood Services**.

Name: _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

If you agree to take part, please confirm what school your child is attending and return a signed copy of your consent in the prepaid envelope provided by Friday, 21 May 1999.

Names of Child: _____

Name and Address of School: _____

_____

14 Me 1999

SAMOAN

SU'ESU'EGA MO LE SIITIA ATU O TAMAITI MAI AOGA FAATAITAI A ATUMOTU PASEFIKA I AOGA TULAGA LUA

I le agaga faaaloalo matou te valaauina oulua ma lo oulua alo o Amanda ina ia auai i le suesuega o lo o ua ta'ua i luga. O le autu o lenei su'esu'ega o le su'esu'eina atili lea o tamaiti sa aoaoina i aoga faataitai a atumotu Pasefika. Ua faamoemoe ia maua ni faamaumauga o finagalo o matua, tamaiti ae maise o faiaoga ina ia fesoasoani ai i faiaoga, matua faapea tamaiti Pasefika ua amata ona aoaoina i aoga tulaga lua.

O tagata su'esu'e mai le Ofisa o su'esu'ega o itu tau a'oa'oga i Niu Sila (N.Z. Council for Educational Research) o le a tauaveina lenei su'esu'ega. O lenei ofisa e tutoatasi ma o lana matafaioi o le faaleleia lea o a'oga e ala i su'esu'ega, mea e faatino ai galuega, o fautuaga ma faaaliga taua ma aoga e ao ona silafia.

Matou te fesiligia matua, faiaoga o Aoga Amata ma aoga tulaga lua, faapea foi tamaiti e uiga i lo latou siitia atu i aoga e pei ona ta'ua.

E 30 tamaiti o lo o fuafuaina e auai i lenei su'esu'ega. O i latou na aoaoina i aoga amata ua uma ona laisene faapea foi ma aoga amata e lei laiseneina. O le matutua o ia tamaiti e 5 tausaga ma ia amata ona aoga i tulaga lua i le faaiuga o le 1998 poo le amataga o le 1999. O le mafuaaga lena ua matou filifilia ai lou lua alo.

Afai e maea le su'esu'ega e mafai ona tuuina atu se lipoti o le tuufaatasiga ua maua mai i le su'esu'ega mo lo outou silafia.

O faamatalaga uma o le a tuuina mai e tausisia ma le faaeteete, e le faalauaiteleina. E gata lava i le au faigaluega o le Ofisa su'esu'e. E le tusia foi o lua suafa i tusitusiga o le su'esu'ega, a e o le a faaaoga se faailoga (code) e iloa ai matua, tamaiti ma faiaoga o Aoga Amata ma aoga tulaga lua.

O i latou o le a feagai ma lenei galuega o Lia Mapa ma Le'autuli'ilagi Malaeta Sauvao, a e lagolago iai Dr Val Podmore.

Afai e iai nisi fesili e uiga i le su'esu'ega, faamolemole faafesootai Dr Val Podmore, Lia Mapa i le ofisa, poo Le'autuli'ilagi Sauvao i le fale, telefoni 235 9091.

Soifua

Val Podmore (Dr)
Tamaitai Su'esu'e Sinia

28 Me 1999

TONGAN

Ki he Mātu'a´ Tauhi Fānau,

Ko e Hiki ('a e Fanau) mei he ngaahi Senitā Ako Faka-Pasifiki´ ma'a e Longa'i Fānau iiki ki he Ako Si'i (Primary).

'Oku mau fakahoko atu i he tohi ni ha Fakaafe kiate koe mo **Vaiolingi** ke mo kau mai' ki he Poloseki Fekumi, 'a ia ko hono Taumu'a', 'oku hā atu 'i 'olunga'. Ko e Taumu'a 'o e Fekumi ni ke ma'u ha 'ilo lahi ange ki he Tūkunga 'o e Hiki 'a e Fānau mei he ngaahi Senitā Ako Faka-Pasifiki ma'a e Longa'i Fānau iiki' ki he Ako Si'i.

'Oku mau faka'amu ke fanongo ki he ngaahi taukei 'a e kau Faiako', ngaahi Mātu'a´ mo e Fānau' foki, pea ke kumi ha founga ke tokoni'i 'aki e kau Faiako' mo e Fānau 'o e 'Otumotu Pasifiki' 'a ia 'oku nau kamata hū ki he Ako Si'i.

Ko e Fakatotolo ni 'oku fai ia 'e he kau ngāue fekumi 'a e Kosoliō Fekumi Fakaako 'a Nu'usila ni (NZCER). Ko e NZCER ko ha kautaha tau'atāina 'oku ngāue 'o fakataumu'a ke ne taukave'i 'a e tu'unga lelei 'o e ako' ke 'inasi ai 'a e kakai 'o Nu'usila ni', 'aki hono fakahoko ha ngaahi fekumi, fakanaunau'i, fale'i mo tānaki 'a e nagaahi fakamatala mahu'inga fakaako.

'Oku mau faka'amu ke faka'eke'eke 'a e kau Faiako (mei he Senitā Ako ma'ae Longa'i fānau iiki' mo e Ako si'i'), ngaahi Mātu'a´, mo e Fānau Ako' foki, 'o fekau'aki mo 'enau hiki mei he Senitā Ako ma'ae Longa'i Fānau iiki' ki he Ako Si'i'.

'I he konga tefito 'o e Fakatotolo ni, 'oku mau palani ke fakakau ki ai ha fānau 'e toko 30 nai 'a ia kuo nau hiki mei he ngaahi Senitā Ako ma'ae Longa'i Fānau iiki' ki he ngaahi ako si'i'. Ko e Fānau 'e fili ke kau 'i he Fekumi', 'e kau ki ai 'a e fānau na'e ako 'i he ngaahi Senitā Ako ma'a e longa'i fānau iiki 'oku 'ikai lesisita' mo e ngaahi senita ako 'oku lesisita ('i he Pule'anga'). Ko e fānau 'e kau ('i he fekumi') kuopau ke nau 'osi ta'u 5 pea na'a nau hū ki he ako si'i 'i he konga kimui 'o e 1998 pē ko e kamata'anga 'o e 1999.

Ko e Fakamatala ko ia te ke fai', 'e mātu'aki malu'i ke ngata pē 'a e 'ilo ki ai' ki he kau ngāue 'a e timi fekumi 'a e NZCER. 'E 'ikai hiki ho hingoa' 'i he ngaahi pepa fakamatala 'oku tauhi ai 'a e ola 'o e faka'eke'eke. Kaekehe, 'e 'i ai pē ho fika ke tokoni kiate kimautolu 'i hono fakahoa 'a e fānau', ngaahi mātu'a', kau faiako 'o e Senitā Ako ma'ae longa'i fānau iiki´ mo e ngaahi Ako si'i'. 'E 'ikai 'aupito ke lava 'o 'ilo'i ha taha 'e kau 'i he faka'eke'eke ni mei he lipooti 'o e fekumi ni. 'I he 'osi 'a e fekumi', 'e tufa atu e tatau 'o e fakamatala nounou 'o e fekumi na'e fai' kiate kinautolu kotoa pē na'e kau ki ai'.

Kapau 'oku 'i ai ha'o ngaahi fehu'i ki he fakatotolo ni, kataki 'o fetu'utaki (telefoni) kia Lia Mapa (Tel: 384 7939 Ext 831).

Faka'apa'apa atu,

Dr Val Podmore
Taki 'o e Kulupu Ngāue Fekumi

'Oku mahino kiate au /kimautolu ko e me'a kotoa pē teu/ te mau fakamatala 'i he faka'eke'eke ni 'e 'ikai hiki 'i ha fakamatala lipooti.

☐ 'Oku ou/mau loto ☐ 'Oku 'ikai teu/te mau loto.

Keu/Ke mau kau 'i he Fekumi- 'Ki he hiki mei he ngaahi Senitā Ako ma'ae Longa'i Fanau iiki' ki he Ako Si'i'.

Hingoa _____

Fakamo'oni Hingoa _____

'Aho _____

17 Me 1999

TOKELAU

HUKEHUKEGA KI TE LAKA ATU O TAMAITI MAI NA AKOGA FAKATAKITAKI A ATUMOTU PAHEFIKA KI NA AKOGA TULAGA LUA

Ki matou kua tuhi atu e valakaugia koulua, ma Moana ke kau fakatahi ki tatou ina hukehukega, kua takua i luga. Ko te kautu o tenei hakilikiliga, ke hukehuke atili ia tamaiti na e aoga ina akoga fakatakitaki, ana atumotu o te Pahefika. Ki matou e fakamoemoe ke maua mai he **iloa** o matua, tamaiti ma faiakoga, ke maua mai ai foki he fehoahoani ki faiakoga, matua ma tamaiti Pahefika kua kamata i te akoga tulaga lua.

Kona tino hukehuke mai te Ofiha Hukehuke ina Itu Tau Akoakoga i Niu Hila (New Zealand Council of Educational Research) ka taukavegia tenei hukehukega. Ko te ofiha tenei NZCER e tu tokatahi. Ko tana galuega ko te fakalelei atili ona akoga e ala mai ina hukehukega, na mea e fakatino ai na galuega, ko na fautuaga ma na fakaaliga taua ma te aoga e tatau ke ki tatou kitea.

Ki matou e fofou ke fehiligia ia matua, faiakoga ona akoga kamata, ma na akoga tulaga lua, vena foki ia tamaiti e uiga ki to latou **laka** atu ki te akoga tulaga lua.

Kua iei te fuafuaga venei ke hukehuke ni tamaiti e 30 nae aoga ina Akoga Kamata kua uma te laihene, e vena foki na Akoga Kamata e heki laiheneagia. Ko na tamaiti kua katoa te 5 tauhaga te matutua. Kua ulufale ki te akoga i te tau fakaikuga o te 1998 pe ko te kamataga o te 1999. Ko te mafuaaga ia kua ki matou filifilia ai tau lua tamaiti.

Kona fakamatalaga ka maua mai ia te koulua, ka matua tauhihi ma te fakaeteete e he fakailoagia ke iloa e ni tino. Na ko te kau hukehuke oioti. E he tuhituhia foki oulua igoa ina tuhituhiga ona hukehukega. Kae fakaaoga he fakailoga (code) e iloa ai na matua, tamaiti, faiakoga ona Akoga Kamata ma na akoga tulaga lua. Kafai e uma tenei hukehukega e mafai oi kavatu hau kopi o te tukufakatahiga na maua ina hukehukega ke kikila koe ki ei.

Kafai e iei hau fehili e uiga ki tenei hukehukega, fakamolemole fakafehokotaki na tino hukehuke ko na igoa i ena i lalo.

Dr Val Podmore (Telefoni 8021443) Lia Mapa (Telefoni 384 7939 Ext 831) Tapaeru Tereora (Telefoni 389 4033) Le'autuli'ilagi Malaeta Sauvao (235 9091) Suria Timoteo (235 7680) ma, Ina Mora (237 5553).

Tofa ni

Val Podmore (Dr)
Takitaki o te Kau Hukehuke

28 May 1999

LETTER TO EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS

Dear

Transition to School from Pacific Islands Early Childhood Services

We are writing to invite you to take part in the above project. The aim of this research is to find out more about the transition of children from Pacific Islands early childhood services to primary school. We hope to hear about the experiences of teachers, parents and children, and to find out about how to help teachers and Pacific Islands children who are starting school.

Researchers from the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER) are carrying out this study. NZCER is an independent organisation whose purpose is to promote quality education for New Zealanders through research and resources, advice and information. This independent research is part of the work programme of NZCER, funded through an agreement with the Ministry of Education for provision of services.

We want to interview teachers (both early childhood and primary school), parents, and children themselves, about their transition to school.

In the main study, we plan to include approximately 30 children moving from a Pacific Islands early childhood provision to school. The sample will include children who have attended language groups as well as licensed and chartered groups. The children will have turned 5 years old, and will have entered primary school late in 1998 or, early in 1999.

The information you offer is strictly confidential to members of the NZCER research team. Your name will not be recorded on the interview notes. However, you will be given a code number to help us match up children, parents, early childhood teachers, and schools. Individuals will not be identifiable in any report from this study. At the end of this study, a copy of the summary of the research will be given to those who were involved.

Up to 3 hours (one half-day) of teacher release time may be claimed from NZCER by your centre to cover the time spent participating in the interview and finding children for the study. The researcher will explain this to you.

If you have any questions about the study, please contact the researcher whose name is highlighted below:

Yours sincerely

Dr Val Podmore
Senior Researcher
Research Group Leader, Early Childhood

I/We understand that what I/we say in this interview will not be written up in any report.

☐ I/we agree ☐ I/we do not agree

to being participant(s) in the research **Transition to School from Pacific Islands Early Childhood Services**.

Name: _____

Signed: _____

LETTER TO SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

26 May 1999

Dear

Transition to School from Pacific Islands Early Childhood Services

We are writing to you to inform you about the above project and to invite your school to participate. The aim of this research is to find out more about the transition of children from Pacific Islands early childhood services to primary school. We hope to hear about the experiences of teachers, parents and children, and to find out about how to help teachers and Pacific Islands children who are starting school. We would like to interview your new entrant teacher(s) who have children who have started school from Pacific Islands early childhood centres.

Researchers from the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER) are carrying out this study. NZCER is an independent organisation whose purpose is to promote quality education for New Zealanders through research and resources, advice and information. This independent research is part of the work programme of NZCER, funded through an agreement with the Ministry of Education for provision of services.

In this study we plan to include approximately 30 children moving from a Pacific Islands early childhood provision to school. The sample will include children who have attended language groups as well as licensed and chartered groups. The children will have turned 5 years old, and will have entered primary school late in 1998 or, early in 1999. We are interviewing teachers (both early childhood and primary school), parents, and children themselves, about transition to school.

We would like your permission to follow up on the children whose names are written on the attached page (marked confidential). The parents of the child/children (attached) have already given their written consent to participate in this study, and to have the school teacher release information about the child's schooling. The children and their families were selected via a Pacific Islands early childhood centre participating in this study.

We are requesting this involvement of your school:

(a) we would like to carry out one interview with the teacher/s of the child/children whose name/s is/are attached. The interview takes about half to one hour and focuses on transition to school from Pacific Islands centres.
(b) for our general policy information, the research team would like access to a copy of your school's charter.

The information your teacher(s) offer is strictly confidential to members of the NZCER research team. Their name(s) will not be recorded on the interview notes. However, they will be given a code number to help us match up children, parents, early childhood teachers, and schools. Individuals will not be identifiable in any report from this study. At the end of this study, a copy of the summary of the research will be given to those who were involved.

Direct expenses for the research, for example, up to one half-day of teacher release time may be claimed from NZCER by your school to cover the time spent by the teacher/s participating in the interview.

If you have any other queries regarding the study, please do not hesitate to contact Dr Val Podmore (Tel: 802 1443), Lia Mapa (Tel: 384 7939 Ext.831)

We would appreciate receiving confirmation of your school's decision at your earliest convenience, by fax to: Lia Mapa, **Fax: 384-7933**

Yours sincerely,

Dr Val Podmore
Research Group Leader

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW SCHEDULES

For Children, Parents, Early Childhood Teachers, and School Teachers.

English-language versions.

[C____]

TRANSITION TO SCHOOL FROM PACIFIC ISLANDS EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES.

CHILDREN'S INTERVIEW

1) Date...../...../.....

2) Your gender:

☐ a) Female ☐ b) Male

3) Date of Birth: _____

4) Early Childhood Centre attended: _____

5) School Child is attending now: _____

6) Please indicate the ethnic group(s) you belong to:

☐ a) Cook Island Maori ☐ b) Niuean ☐ c) Samoan ☐ d) Tokelauan ☐ e) Tongan

☐ f) Other **(please describe)** .....

g 123
456
789

7) Number of children in family: _____

8) Birth order (example, 1st born, 2nd born, 3rd born....): _____

TRANSITION TO SCHOOL FROM
PACIFIC ISLANDS EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES.

CHILDREN'S INTERVIEW

Please build up friendly rapport with the child. Ask the child these questions (If the child does not answer verbally, clear non-verbal responses can be recorded.) Say to the child"I want to ask you some questions, and I'm going to write down what you say so that I can remember it later". Translate questions where appropriate.

A. What are the similarities and differences between the contexts of home, early childhood and school settings?

1. Tell me what you like doing (here) at home?
[Probe: What is your favourite thing to do here at home?]

_____ 1 1 2 3
_____ 4 5 6
_____ 7 8 9

2. What books do you (like to) read at home?

_____ 2 1 2 3
_____ 4 5 6
_____ 7 8 9

3. What do you like doing at school?
[Probe: What is your favourite thing you do at school?]

_____ 3 1 2 3
_____ 4 5 6
_____ 7 8 9

4. What are some of the things that you don't like doing at school?

_____ 4 1 2 3
_____ 4 5 6
_____ 7 8 9

5. What books do you read at school?

5 1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9

6. If you are trying to read something, but it's hard, what do you do?

6 1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9

7. What did you like doing at—(Pacific Island early childhood group/centre, example, A'oga Amata)?

7 1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9

B. What are the aspirations, expectations, and views of children of these contexts?

1. What did you like about starting school?

1 1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9

2. What didn't you like about starting school?
[*Probe: Why didn't you like that?*]

2 1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9

3. Did you choose this school?

3 1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9

4. Do you have friends from—[Pacific Islands early childhood centre] at this school?

41 2 3

4 5 6

7 8 9

C. How well do children make the transition between the contexts (as defined by the children themselves)?

1. Do you like it when your mother, father, aunty, or grandparent, stays at school with you?

11 2 3

4 5 6

7 8 9

2. Did you talk about school at [your centre]?

21 2 3

4 5 6

7 8 9

3. Did your parents talk about school?

31 2 3

4 5 6

7 8 9

D. How can the information collected in this study assist teachers and parents to facilitate transition across the three contexts?

1. What would you like done at school to make you happy?

11 2 3

4 5 6

7 8 9

E. How do schools continue to assist and support the home languages and cultures of Pacific Islands children starting primary school?

1. Do you speak [Pacific language] at school?

☐ a) Yes ☐ b) No [*If no,go to question 2.*]

If yes, with whom? [*Probe: with students, friends, with teachers*]

c1 2 3

4 5 6

7 8 9

2. Do you speak [Pacific language] at home?

c1 2 3

4 5 6

7 8 9

3. Did you speak [Pacific language] at the centre ?

c1 2 3

4 5 6

7 8 9

4. Are there any questions that you would like to ask me?

c1 2 3

4 5 6

7 8 9

Thank you for talking to me. This was very helpful.

[P____]

TRANSITION TO SCHOOL FROM PACIFIC ISLANDS EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

PARENTS' INTERVIEW

Researchers from the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER) are carrying out this study to find out more about the transition to school from Pacific Islands early childhood services. NZCER is an independent organisation whose purpose is to promote quality education for New Zealanders through research and resources, advice and information.

The information you offer is strictly confidential to members of the NZCER research team. Your name will not be recorded on this document, however, an identification code will be allocated to you for administrative purposes. Individuals will not be identifiable in any report from this study.

The main purpose of the interview is to hear about parents' views and experiences of their child's transition to school from Pacific Islands early childhood services. This interview is expected to take about half an hour. Your views and experiences are important to the study. But if there are any questions you would rather not answer, that's quite all right, we'll leave them out.

1) Date...../...../.....

2) Parent(s)/Grandparent(s)/Caregiver/Other: _____

3) Please indicate your age:

☐ a) Less than 20 ☐ b) 21-30 ☐ c) 31-40 ☐ d) 41-50 ☐ e) 51-60 ☐ f) 61+

4) Your gender:

☐ a) Female ☐ b) Male

5) Please indicate the ethnic group(s) you belong to:

☐ a) Cook Island Māori ☐ b) Niuean ☐ c) Samoan ☐ d) Tokelauan ☐ e) Tongan

☐ f) Other **(please describe)** .....

g 1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9

A. What are the similarities and differences between the contexts of home, early childhood centre, and school settings?

1. In what ways are home, early childhood centre, and school the same?

1 1 2 3

4 5 6

7 8 9

2. In what ways are home, early childhood centre, and school different?

2 1 2 3

4 5 6

7 8 9

B. What are the aspirations, expectations, and views of parents, teachers, and children of these contexts?

1. What do you expect your child to learn at home?

1 1 2 3

4 5 6

7 8 9

2. What do you expect your child to learn at the early childhood centre?

2 1 2 3

4 5 6

7 8 9

3. What do you expect your child to learn at school?

3 1 2 3

4 5 6

7 8 9

C. How well do children make the transition between the contexts (as defined by the children themselves)?

1. How well did your child settle in to school?

[*Probe: What happened? What was the process?*]

1 1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9

2. Were there any concerns?

[*Probe: Did you or the school have any concerns about your child settling in?*]

2 1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9

3. Did you choose the school that your child attends?

☐ a) Yes ☐ b) No

Comments: [*How was the decision made?*]

3 1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9

D. How can the information collected in this study assist teachers and parents to facilitate transition across the three contexts?

1. What would you have liked the school to do, to make starting school (or transition to school) more comfortable for your child?

1 1 2 3

4 5 6

7 8 9

2. What information could be given to parents to help make starting school easier for their child/children?

2 1 2 3

4 5 6

7 8 9

E. How do schools continue to assist and support the home languages and cultures of Pacific Islands children starting primary school?

1. What language(s) does your child speak at home?

1 1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9

2. What language(s) does your child speak at school?

2 1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9

3. If your child goes to church, what language(s) does your child speak at church?

3 1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9

4. If your child speaks [Pacific language] only at early childhood centres, how did s/he find the change to an English only classroom?

4 1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9

5A. Does your child's school teach Pacific languages?

☐ a) Yes ☐ b) No

5B. If yes, what languages?

c1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9

5C. If no, do you want the Pacific languages to be taught in your child's school?

☐ a) Yes ☐ b) No

Comments:

c1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9

6. How can schools support the home language and culture of Pacific Island children?

61 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9

7. What is the language policy of the school?

71 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9

8. Have you ever discussed the language policy as a school community?

8 1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9

9A. Do you see an advantage of parents taking part in their children's learning?

☐ a) Yes ☐ b) No

9B. If yes, how?

8 1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9

10. Are there any other questions you would like to ask me?

1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9

11. Is there anything else you would like to say about transition to school?

1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9

Thank you for taking part in this interview. This was very helpful and useful. When the study is finished we will write a summary of what we found for participants.

[ECT____]

TRANSITION TO SCHOOL FROM PACIFIC ISLANDS EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES.

EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS' INTERVIEW

Researchers from the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER) are carrying out this study to find out more about the transition to school from Pacific Islands early childhood services. NZCER is an independent organisation whose purpose is to promote quality education for New Zealanders through research and resources, advice and information.

The information you offer is strictly confidential to members of the NZCER research team. Your name will not be recorded on this document, however, an identification code will be allocated to you for administrative purposes. Individuals will not be identifiable in any report from this study.

The main purpose of the interview is to hear about early childhood teachers'/supervisors' views and experiences of the transition to school from Pacific Islands early childhood services. This interview is expected to take about half an hour. Your views and experiences are important to the study. But if there are any questions you would rather not answer, that's quite all right, we'll leave them out.

1) Date...../...../.....

2) School teacher: _____

3) Please indicate your age:

☐ a) Less than 20 ☐ b) 21-30 ☐ c) 31-40 ☐ d) 41-50 ☐ e) 51-60 ☐ f) 61+

4) Your gender:

☐ a) Female ☐ b) Male

5) Please indicate the ethnic group(s) you belong to:

☐ a) Cook Island Maori ☐ b) Niuean ☐ c) Samoan ☐ d) Tokelauan ☐ e) Tongan

☐ f) Other **(please describe)** .....

g 1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9

6) What languages do you speak?

☐ a) Cook Island Maori ☐ b) Niuean ☐ c) Samoan ☐ d) Tokelauan ☐ e) Tongan

☐ f) Other **(please describe)** ..... g 1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9

A. What are the similarities and differences between the contexts of home, early childhood centre, and school settings?

Thinking about the child/children who go on to school from your Pacific Islands early childhood centre:

1. In what ways are home, early childhood settings, and school the same?

1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9

2. In what ways are home, early childhood settings, and school different?

1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9

B. What are the aspirations, expectations, and views of parents, teachers, and children of these contexts?

1. What do you expect of the children from your Pacific Islands Language centre when they go on to school?

1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9

2. What skills do you expect children from your centre to have when they start school?

1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9

3A. Do you have any concerns about your expectations and the child/children's skills when they start school?

☐ a) Yes ☐ b) No *[If no,go to question 4.]*

If yes, please explain

1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9

B) How were you able to cope with these concerns?

1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9

4. **What do you expect parents to do, to help the child's transition to school?**

1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9

C. How well do children make the transition between the contexts (as defined by the children themselves)?

1. **When children first start school, do you have any contact with their parents?**

☐ a) Yes ☐ b) No *[If no,go to question 2.]* ☐ c) Some

If yes, or some, in your experience, do you think a child normally settles in better if the parent stays or if the child is left with the teacher?

d1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9

2. **What Pacific Islands resources (example: Pacific Islands books, language) do you have at this centre?**

1 2 3

4 5 6

7 8 9

D. How can the information collected in this study assist teachers and parents to facilitate transition across the three contexts?

1. **How can the information collected in this study assist early childhood teachers (staff here) to facilitate transition from a Pacific Islands centre to school?**

1 2 3

4 5 6

7 8 9

2. **How can the information collected in this study help early childhood teachers (centre staff) to facilitate transition from home to school?**

1 2 3

4 5 6

7 8 9

E. How do schools continue to assist and support the home languages and cultures of Pacific Islands children starting primary school?

Thinking about the children who have started this year.

PART A

1. To what extent do you think that the school should support the home languages and cultures of Pacific Islands children?

1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9

2. When the children from your Pacific Islands early childhood centre start school, how do the schools continue to assist and support their home language and culture?

1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9

3. How do you suggest the schools might go about maintaining the languages and cultures of Pacific Islands children?

1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9

PART B [Child's ID:_____]

1a. What language(s) does (child's/children's name) speak at school?

_____ 1 2 3

_____ 4 5 6

_____ 7 8 9

1b. What language(s) does the (child's/children's name) speak to his/her friends?

_____ 1 2 3

_____ 4 5 6

_____ 7 8 9

2. What language(s) does (child's/children's name) speak at home?

_____ 1 2 3

_____ 4 5 6

_____ 7 8 9

2. What language did (child's/children's name) speak at the early childhood
3. centre before starting school?

_____ 1 2 3

_____ 4 5 6

_____ 7 8 9

4. Are there any other questions or comments you would like to ask or say about transition to schools?

_____ 1 2 3

_____ 4 5 6

_____ 7 8 9

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for taking part in this interview. This was very helpful and useful. When the study is finished we will send you a copy of the report.

[ST____]

TRANSITION TO SCHOOL FROM PACIFIC ISLANDS EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES. SCHOOL TEACHERS' INTERVIEW

Researchers from the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER) are carrying out this study to find out more about the transition to school from Pacific Islands early childhood services. NZCER is an independent organisation whose purpose is to promote quality education for New Zealanders through research and resources, advice and information.

The information you offer is strictly confidential to members of the NZCER research team. Your name will not be recorded on this document, however, an identification code will be allocated to you for administrative purposes. Individuals will not be identifiable in any report from this study.

The main purpose of the interview is to hear about teachers' views and experiences of the transition to school from Pacific Islands early childhood services. This interview is expected to take about half an hour. Your views and experiences are important to the study. But if there are any questions you would rather not answer, that's quite all right, we'll leave them out.

1) Date...../...../.....

2) School teacher code: _____

3) School code: _____

4) Please indicate your age:

☐ a) Less than 20 ☐ b) 21-30 ☐ c) 31-40 ☐ d) 41-50 ☐ e) 51-60 ☐ f) 61+

5) Your gender:

☐ a) Female ☐ b) Male

6) Please indicate the ethnic group(s) you belong to:

☐ a) Cook Island Maori ☐ b) Niuean ☐ c) Samoan ☐ d) Tokelauan ☐ e) Tongan

☐ f) Other **(please describe)** ..... g 123 456 789

7) What languages do you speak?

☐ a) Cook Island Maori ☐ b) Niuean ☐ c) Samoan ☐ d) Tokelauan

☐ e) Tongan ☐ f) Other **(please describe)** ..... g 123 456 789

8) Please enter the initial of the child/children _____.

A. What are the similarities and differences between the contexts of home, school, and early childhood centre, and school settings?

Thinking about the child/children who come to your classroom from a Pacific Islands early childhood centre:

1. What similarities do you find between home, early childhood settings, and school?

1 2 3

4 5 6

7 8 9

2. What differences do you find between home, early childhood settings, and school?

1 2 3

4 5 6

7 8 9

B. What are the aspirations, expectations, and views of parents, teachers, and children of these contexts?

1. What do you expect of children from Pacific Islands Language centres when they start school?

1 2 3

4 5 6

7 8 9

2. What skills do you expect children from Pacific Islands language centres to have?

1 2 3

4 5 6

7 8 9

3A. Do you have any concerns about your expectations and the child/children's skills when they start school?

☐ a) Yes ☐ b) No *[If no,go to question 4.]*

c) If yes, please explain

1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9

3B. How were you able to cope with these concerns?

1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9

4. **What do you expect parents to do, to help the child's transition to school?**

1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9

5. **How supportive do you find the parents' participation in the classroom and/or the school?**

1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9

C. How well do children make the transition between the contexts (as defined by the children themselves)?

1. **In your experience, do you think a child normally settles in better if the parent(s) or extended family member(s) stays, or if the child is left with the teacher?**

☐ a) Stays ☐ b) Not Stay

c) If parent(s) or extended family member stays, how long?

☐ a) 1-2 hours ☐ b) 1/2 a day ☐ c) Whole day

☐ d) Other (Please specify)

cd 1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9

2. **What is your school's policy about parent(s) or extended family members staying, or not staying, in the classroom?**

1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9

3. **What is your attitude towards erratic attendance during the first few weeks if the child is having difficulties in settling in?**

1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9

4. **What Pacific Island resources (example: Pacific Islands books, crafts, posters, language, materials) do you have at the school?**

1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9

D. How can the information collected in this study assist teachers and parents to facilitate transition across the three contexts?

1. How can the information collected in this study assist teachers to facilitate transition from a Pacific Island centre to school?

1 2 3

4 5 6

7 8 9

2. How can the information collected in this study assist teachers to facilitate transition from home to school?

1 2 3

4 5 6

7 8 9

E. How do schools continue to assist and support the home languages and cultures of Pacific children starting primary school?

[Probe: Now I would like to ask you some questions about the child/children in this study.]

PART A

1. To what extent do you think that the school should support the home languages and cultures of Pacific children?

1 2 3

4 5 6

7 8 9

2. How does your school continue to assist and support the home languages and cultures of Pacific Islands children starting primary school? (If they have received the support from their early childhood centre.)

1 2 3

4 5 6

7 8 9

3. In your classroom how do you assist and support the home languages and cultures of Pacific Islands children starting primary school?

1 2 3

4 5 6

7 8 9

4. How do you suggest the school might go about maintaining the languages and cultures of Pacific Islands children?

1 2 3

4 5 6

7 8 9

PART B [Child's ID: _____]

1a. What language(s) does (child's/children's name) speak in the classroom?

_____ 1 2 3

_____ 4 5 6

_____ 7 8 9

1b. What language(s) does (child's/children's name) speak in the playground?

_____ 1 2 3

_____ 4 5 6

_____ 7 8 9

2. What language(s) does (child's/children's name) speak at home?

_____ 1 2 3

_____ 4 5 6

_____ 7 8 9

3. What language did (child's/children's name) speak at the early childhood centre before starting school?

_____ 1 2 3

_____ 4 5 6

_____ 7 8 9

4. Are there any other questions you would like to ask me?

_____ 1 2 3

_____ 4 5 6

_____ 7 8 9

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

5. Is there anything else you would like to say about transition to school?

1 2 3

4 5 6

7 8 9

Thank you for taking part in this interview. This was very helpful and useful. When the study is finished we will write a summary of what we found for participants.

APPENDIX C: GLOSSARY

This glossary includes some of the definitions originally provided by the Ministry of Education for Diane Mara's (1998b) report. It also includes translations of Pacific Islands words used in this document.

Early Childhood Service

An inclusive term used by the Ministry of Education to apply to all licensed and/or chartered early childhood groups (centre-based and home-based)—it includes home-based networks, childcare centres, playcentres, kohanga reo, kindergartens, PIECCs, irrespective of philosophy or legal ownership (i.e., privately operated or community based).

Early Childhood Centre

Defined by section 308 (1) of the Education Act 1991 as any premises used (exclusively, mainly, or regularly) for the education or care of 3 or more children (not being the children of the persons providing the education or care) under 6 years of age.

Licence-exempt Playgroups and Pacific Islands Language Groups (PILGs)

Required to meet Government-approved criteria which were published in the *NZ Gazette*. They are administered, supported, and funded, where eligible, by the Early Childhood Development service. Some playgroups work towards becoming licensed, while others choose to remain as playgroups.

Licensing Process

The legal process whereby premises are approved by the Ministry of Education as meeting the requirements of the ECE Regs 1998 and thereby able to legally operate as an early childhood centre. The licence is granted to specific premises and not to the licensee. All premises are inspected to ensure all requirements are met before a licence is granted. Licensed centres, with the exception of kohanga reo, do not attract Ministry of Education funding. They are, however, if fee-charging services, eligible for the childcare fee subsidy administered by the Department of Social Welfare. This fee subsidy ceases when children are eligible to enrol in school, i.e., at the age of 5 years. However, the subsidy continues if a child remains at the centre for his/her 5th year and has identified special education needs.

Translation of Key Terms

The table below lists translations of words from the 5 Pacific Islands ethnic groups involved in the study.

English	Cook Islands Maori	Niue	Samoan	Tokelauan	Tongan
Respect	Akonoanga akangateitei	Mahani fakalilifu	Faaaloalo	Fakaaloalo	Faka'apa'apa
Early Childhood Centre	Punanga	-	a'oga 'āmata	Akoga Kamata	-
Honorific	-	-	Fa'alupega		-
Prayer	Pure	Liogi	Lotu/tatalo	Lotu	Lotu

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